Peter Martin Friesen

Mennonites in North America
(1874-1910)

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Translated from German by Jake K. Balzer

"It is over thirty years since the translation of Part I of P.M. Friesen's *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland* was published (1978). Strangely, no reference is made by the editors to the fact that Part II was not included in the translation. No doubt, various factors determined the exclusion of that material. Despite the general disregard of the American section, many have felt that it deserves more attention and scrutiny. While many of the documents in the section are taken from other published sources, some do not appear elsewhere and, if they do, have never been translated into English. The section clearly gives new perspectives by Americans themselves. The translation is also valuable in several other ways. First, it tells us what the Russian Mennonites were reading about their co-religionists in America. Further, it also gives us further significant insight into Friesen's own perspectives, many of which are reflected in the footnotes and others in brief statements within the main text. All those who have made this translation possible are to be congratulated!"

—**Abe J. Dueck**, chair of the Historical Commission of the U.S. and Canadian Mennonite Brethren Churches

"Part II of P.M. Friesen's Mennonite history addresses the North American era. Written during 1910, it was one of the first attempts to put the North American Anabaptist Mennonite story in the hands of church leaders and historians. Of necessity, this second portion was not written to report the North American experiences in great detail, but to frame their spiritual and lifestyle beginnings in the western hemisphere."

—**Raymond F. Wiebe**, historian and member of Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Advisory Board, Hillsboro, Kansas

"P.M. Friesen's account of Mennonite immigration, cultural assimilation, and spiritual development in the United States and Canada, Part II, consists of a diverse collection of documentation and data, taken from published and unpublished sources, including both anecdotal and formal presentations. Some authors and submitters were widely-known, some lesser known. Some had clerical credentials, some had spiritual zeal. Friesen's efforts to focus on the good, yet maintain integrity, give us a genuine history, rather than a sanitized history" (from the Preface).

—**Peggy Goertzen**, Director, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas

MENNONITES IN NORTH AMERICA (1874–1910)

Peter Martin Friesen

MENNONITES IN NORTH AMERICA (1874–1910)

Part II of ***Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland (1789–1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte***

Translated from German by Jake K. Balzer

Winnipeg, MB

Goessel, KS

Mennonites in North America (1874–1910)

Translation of Part II of Peter M. Friesen's Mennonite history, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland (1789–1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte* (Halbstadt, Taurida: Raduga, 1911).

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Preface

What a gift it has been to have the major portion of P.M. Friesen's volume, Part I, translated into English! The second portion, however, dealing specifically with the North American experience, still in German, was inaccessible. I found myself making repeated references to Part II, in assisting those making inquiries and those engaged in serious research, but it was a closed resource. Having this section translated into English will be such a help, and open a new window on a "more contemporary" history of the Mennonites.

P.M. Friesen's account of Mennonite immigration, cultural assimilation, and spiritual development in the United States and Canada, Part II, consists of a diverse collection of documentation and data, taken from published and unpublished sources, including both anecdotal and formal presentations. Some authors and submitters were widely-known, some lesser known. Some had clerical credentials, some had spiritual zeal. Friesen's efforts to focus on the good, yet maintain integrity, give us a genuine history, rather than a sanitized history. All were included in Friesen's attempt to "honor the brethren who have become precious to us during the collection and writing, as well as to all the manifold branches of our entire precious family of faith of the Mennonite Brotherhood."

Initially conceived as "a specialized study of the Mennonite Brethren Church," in Friesen's words, the volume grew to become a history of all Mennonites. This is church history which augments official minutes, a history which at times includes contradictory viewpoints, varying perspectives and inconsistent recollections. It is precisely this human personal aspect of history which helps us see and understand "our story" as Mennonites in "the new world." This is our "map of reality," articulating the personalities, events and theologies which helped to shape our identity and our witness.

Our Mennonite story with its accomplishments and failures encourages us to continue, to press on in our pilgrimage as people of faith. In the words of Elder Heinrich Voth, at the conclusion of his report of Bingham Lake, Minnesota, "It was the Lord, who in spite of all the shortcomings and infirmities, bore with us and always helped

us." May we learn, continue to grow and pursue the "spiritual union of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peggy Goertzen, Director
Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies
Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas

Acknowledgments

Any translation project is a labor of love. The translation of Part II of Peter M. Friesen's magisterial Mennonite history, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland (1789–1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte* (Halbstadt, Taurida: Raduga, 1911), focusing on the Mennonites in North America (1874–1910), is no exception. It could not have been produced without the assistance and contributions of many people. I am pleased to note the people who helped to bring the over-a-decade-long project to a happy conclusion.

In 1999, Peggy Goertzen, Director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Hillsboro, Kansas, first began to promote the idea of making an English translation of the "American" section of P.M. Friesen's Mennonite history. According to Peggy, "It provided details and perspectives not found elsewhere." It described a key section of the Mennonite story in North America, especially as it related to the Great Plains region of the central USA and Canada. She shared the idea with colleagues at the Historical Commission, the bi-national initiative of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, and even initiated several translation attempts.

In 2004, Heinrich Loewen, then Director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, Manitoba, came into contact with the translation work of Jake K. Balzer of Calgary, Alberta. Recalling Peggy's advocacy during Historical Commission meetings, Heinrich asked Jake if he would take on the task of translating the last portion of P.M. Friesen's Mennonite history. Jake agreed; and the project became a joint one, sponsored by the Hillsboro Center and the Winnipeg Centre.

Jake devoted himself to the monumental task, spending the better part of a year on the translation. He completed the first draft in 2005. The patience and persistence required to work with P.M. Friesen's dense German syntax and interminably long sentences is truly remarkable. Thank you, Jake.

In 2005, Ken Reddig, the next Director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, took the project further by working with several others to refine the translation manuscript.

In 2009, the subsequent Director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, Doug Heidebrecht, asked Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder of Winnipeg to review the translation for readability. She worked her way through the entire manuscript offering many helpful stylistic suggestions.

In 2011, the manuscript moved another step toward publication. Conrad Stoesz, archivist at the Winnipeg Centre since 1999, once again brought the often-delayed project to the attention of the Director, the fourth since the project began! This time it was my turn to get involved, as the new Director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg.

During the last year, a host of people contributed to speed the manuscript toward publication. Abe J. Dueck double checked the translation of the footnotes. Susan Huebert carefully integrated the various drafts and constructed the indices, expanding the Subject Index with place names and names of periodicals. I did the final editing and set the page layout, making it print-ready with the good counsel of Elenore Doerksen from Kindred Productions and Joel Klassen from the Hillsboro Free Press. Ed Lenzmann carefully read the page proofs and offered numerous helpful suggestions. And special thanks goes to graphic artist, Diane Steiner, for designing a wonderful book cover that carries forward aspects of the original cover.

I thank all of you for your labor of love that made the translation of the "American" section of P.M. Friesen's Mennonite history, first envisioned by Peggy some thirteen years ago, a reality at last. May it prove a useful resource, both for remembering the Mennonite story in North America (1874–1910) and for charting that story into the future.

Jon Isaak, Director
Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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1. Peter Martin Friesen (1849–1914), Mennonite Brethren minister, educator, and historian, with his wife, Susanna (Fast) Friesen

Author's Preface[1]

"It's been a long, long time!"

It was on a Sunday evening in the midsummer of 1886, shortly before my departure from Halbstadt, after I had resigned my position at the Secondary School there, that my friend and former colleague, the now deceased minister Johann Johann Wieler, approached me with the duly recorded decision of the Rueckenau M.B. Church to commission me to write the history of the M.B. Church during its first twenty-five years. At the same time, he turned a portion of the historical material over to me, charged me to collect the necessary further material, to question the older brethren for information, and presented me with fifty rubles travelling money, as well as a part of the payment intended for me. The way in which these people thought of the size of the history and the length of time it would take to compile the material was expressed by one prominent member of the congregation — an old (former) Area Administrative Officer — in the following words: "That is a nice piece of work exactly suited for Friesen. But he will also earn handsomely from it, for he will complete it in fourteen days!" Similar, but not quite such extreme thoughts, were probably harbored by most members of the fellowship. And the way in which they conceived the history was expressed by another, a common brother of the M.B. Church (who was expelled from the same a few years later and remained expelled because of an unfit life): "Well, then, you are going to write our history and prove conclusively that we are in the right and the 'church' in the wrong!" The unadorned honesty of these words so amazed me that I was lost for a rejoinder (which seldom happens). An important, totally different piece of advice was given me by the old Br. Jakob Reimer of Felsenthal, as he turned some important documents over to me with his blessing. "Write truth," he said, "the good and the bad, as the Bible did concerning David!" These were the two great warnings which the God of my life gave me before the writing of my book. Should I write in the spirit of the first? Certainly not! But in the manner recommended by father Reimer — yes, that was right, but how difficult!

And the time? Instead of "fourteen days" it took twenty-five years! At the annual meeting of the Mennonite Brethren General Conference in

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[1] Editor's note: The translation of the Author's Preface appears in the English translation of P.M. Friesen's Mennonite history, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789–1910)*, translated and edited by J.B. Toews, Abraham Friesen, Peter J. Klassen, and Harry Loewen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1978), xxvii–xxxiii, and is reprinted here with permission. The section numbers (§) in the Preface refer to sections in Part I of Friesen's Mennonite history; and the page numbers correspond to the English translation.

Rueckenau of May 1890, the author felt constrained to inform the meeting that he had committed an act of folly in already attempting to write the history of "these times." Nor did he care to state his reasons openly: "It was still too difficult to be objective." But by now the whole fellowship, which had undertaken the project at the request of the Rueckenau congregation, was already buzzing because of the "protracted delay of the history." A few people, whom I had initiated into the matter and who understood it, represented me at the conference, and the latter accepted the collection of sifted, ordered, and elucidated material presented, through a recorded vote, as an adequate return for the money it had paid out. It declared that from now on author and conference were to stand on a free relationship to one another as far as work accomplished and remuneration extended was concerned. (The honorable conference has made a few small payments for various materials I have given them toward a "history of the M.B. Church," for which I express my thanks.) Then, in 1900, it was decided to publish a very short "history" as a supplement to the "Confession of Faith," etc. (cf. §389); but due to a misunderstanding between the author and the conference — the consequence of delays in the mails — this was never brought to fruition. In 1902, for reasons mentioned in §70, a somewhat larger piece was finally to be printed. But this too did not materialize, to the great joy of the author. God would not allow a "little hat to be built on chicken feet" (a Russian proverb).

And why, aside from the external hindrances, did the project take so long? For even I agreed more or less with the optimistic evaluation concerning my ability to write this "history" expressed by the old Area Administrative Officer and more or less shared by Wieler and all other interested parties! Had I not successfully completed a (even though not academic) specialized examination in order to teach the Russian language (and literature = history), general and Russian history and geography! Had I not taught these subjects for thirteen years and read quite widely in history and church history! At the same time I knew so many "old folks" personally from the Mennonite Church as well as from amongst the "brethren." I remembered a great many incidents from the "olden days" I had myself experienced (although not as a boy or youth). Yes, but now the Low German Mennonite proverb — "The untried person speaks without thinking" — was to come true! I visited many "old folks," loving uncles and brothers. They contradicted one another; one said this, another that. They contradicted themselves; they narrated things differently than they were given in the minutes of meetings they had themselves signed, differently than their own letters and "reports" (given to me by them or through the Rueckenau church council). In a period of ten-to-twenty-five years (in-

deed, in one-to-five years!), traditions regarding these events had developed in rural areas which interpreted the events the way they wished them to have happened! And they were quite honest in all this. Nor was there any difference between those belonging to the Mennonite Church or the "brethren" in this regard. Under these circumstances it was not easy to write in opposition to the word of the "common brother" (as a dishonest historical maxim) and in line with father Reimer's principle of truth. Emotions and historical conscience came into severe conflict.

Time and again I listened to dozens of honorable men and women from the various factions and read and reread their documents — and a great sorrow overcame me! I could impossibly present loving old men of this or that faction in all their nakedness in a cold-blooded fashion during their lifetime, a nakedness of which they had themselves been unaware. Indeed, as I shall elaborate below in the delineation of my historical procedure, it became very difficult for me to treat men from the fellowship, who had already been in their graves for fifty years, in a truthful historical fashion; all of them have left a circle of admirers behind who see them in the light of a pious tradition. Their children and grandchildren live in our midst. To write contemporary history is a difficult task for one's psyche! I found a way out. I began by sorting the documents — hundreds upon hundreds of private and official papers — according to year and day and began to copy them into a "chronicle" with explanatory footnotes. After three months of work (after Halbstadt, I lived in the Kuban settlement of Wohldemfuerst for twenty months), I carefully packed up all my original documents and the copies I had made and, tired of the impression that all the historical material from my immediate and personal surroundings had made upon me — which weighed down upon me like a mountain — I went on a series of trips.

During the time of my stay at the Kuban, I visited many Mennonite and other congregations, watching, listening, thinking, and constantly gathering material. Things I never dreamed existed came into my hands. Thus, because of the many interruptions, the "writing" also took longer than I had ever imagined. After a period of eight years as minister in Odessa, God gave me nearly two years of uninterrupted peace and quiet as a convalescent. During that time and with the help of my best secretary — my dear wife — I began to work on 5,000 pages of manuscript (to which, during my thirteen years in Sevastopol, again as much material was added), always in the same format of a "chronicle" (to the point of a diary) of our history. After constant expansion, it finally turned out to be not a "History of the M.B. Church," but a history of the Mennonites in Russia

within the framework of the totality of Mennonite history, as the present title indicates.

With respect to my ecclesiastical, intellectual, and cultural position generally, I would request the reader, who, from the outset, would like to know with whom he is dealing, to read pages 205, 301–03, 307, 453–54, 498, 543(b), 631–36, 733–35, 748, 785, 787, 854, etc., and especially the concluding chapter, page 975 to the end, if he is so inclined.

Finally, in 1906, I once again presented my now essentially completed manuscript (about two-thirds the size of the present book) to the annual meeting of the M.B. Church through the oral and written explanation of two ministers, that is, two elders of the same church. I did this because the M.B. Church had, as initiator of the project, perhaps not a legal, but at least a moral right to the work. I asked the conference what it wanted to do with the "historical material" (of which, in the original, a considerable part, though by far not the greatest amount, belonged to it). The meeting, by a recorded conference decision, declined any further participation and turned everything over to me personally.

In 1909, sick and condemned to die by the verdict of the doctors, I offered the handwritten materials to a younger man from our midst, who had specialized in the study of history so that he might fashion something new from them. But he and another young specialist, together with the partners of the Raduga publishing firm (the latter renewing their plea), insisted that the book should be printed the way it was. As always, J. Ph. Isaak, my authorized agent in these matters, was actively involved. For a considerable time, so shortly "before my imminent death," I could not summon the courage to take the responsibility upon myself for seeing the book through to the press and all the criticism which was sure to follow from the publication of such a study. But God, who has led me in this matter, once again granted me strength and courage, and in the summer of 1809, I entered into an agreement with Raduga to publish the study. Instead of six months, the publication took two years; at times I was at fault, at times the publishers were at fault. Various circumstances caused me to increase the size of the book by half again that of the original — to a certain extent against the wishes of the publisher. During this two-year period, I was forced to do most of my work in bed (half sitting, half lying — one learns how to do many things if one is forced to).

In spite of the fact that it was constantly expanded, the composition of the study has retained the character of a "chronicle" employed from the beginning. Endless new "insertions," "appendices," etc., have not made an overview of the whole any easier to achieve and have made a proper relationship between the major and minor subdivisions a virtual impossibil-

ity. I have therefore attempted, by means of numerous references from paragraph to paragraph, to draw the thread of continuity for the studious reader. Many sections had to be doubled and divided — § . . . (2), etc. — because of the above-mentioned insertions.

The exceedingly large size of that section of the book that deals with the M.B. Church, in comparison to the majority group, was a natural outgrowth of the original conception of the study as a specialized study of the M.B. Church. On the other hand, however, it also contains much that pertains to the total history of the Mennonites. When the study was expanded to include the history of all the Mennonites in Russia, only very little could be eliminated from this specialized section without sacrificing much that was worthwhile, especially for the coherence, of the whole.

As far as the content is concerned, I wished to copy as much as possible from the mass of original material rather than write much myself. Not that this was easier for the author, but situations and personalities could be depicted more faithfully in this way, than if the author had attempted to referee between them, intruding and allowing his personality to come to the fore, whether he desired to do so or not.

I have been at pains conscientiously to cite all the sources. Should I have omitted to do so in places, or should the copyrights have been unintentionally anywhere infringed upon, I most urgently beg to be excused and declare myself to be obligated to rectify every justifiable claim. I express my most sincere and heartiest thanks to all who have helped me directly or indirectly — some have done so most willingly.

With regard to our Mennonite history, the following was the fundamental principle of historical integrity: to say as much good as was possible and as much of the bad as we had to in order to remain truthful. Whenever I was forced to vex someone, I was always grieved first before I could write down the troublesome part. I often battled these things for years.

I have already become aware of many mistakes. It is the duty of an open, objective criticism to point others out to me. Since, given the state of my health and the conditions existing in the Mennonite book market, it is impossible to think that I shall live to see a revised edition. I have already begun to prepare a supplemental volume (commercially totally independent of this book) entitled "Supplements and Corrections to the Old Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood." In this way I retain, as long as I am still alive and able to work, the discipline and custom of serving my fellowship as much as I can in the area of history, and the purchaser of the book, which has meanwhile become quite expensive, is not hurt through a partial loss of value by a (if possible!) second edition soon to follow upon the heels of the first. For a small price he can purchase the "Sup-

plements and Corrections" and thus have the benefit of a revised edition. Another project underway is the continuation and completion (of the beginning, end, and parts in between) of my original "chronicle" through the simple copying of many newly discovered and acquired unique documents. If at all, this study could naturally only be published in a very limited edition, since it would only interest historians and researchers. A third project is the writing of smaller pieces, such as biographies and the narration of episodes out of the life of the Russian Mennonites (like that of the "Mennonite Thief").

My attitude toward my Mennonite comrades according to the flesh as well as the faith is readily apparent in the book. Nevertheless, I wish to add that I have acquired a measure of love and — if the expression is appropriate — patriotism for the "brotherhood" throughout the entire world that I had not dreamed possible before. It is true that I have remained the same *Allianz* Christian[2] that my lifestyle and Christian experiences led me to become. But my soul is full of sympathy and interest for "our" little flock spread over the whole world. And during twenty-five years I would have answered the question of what I was doing with: "I seek my brethren!" in a very special sense. Nor did I wish to leave even the most meager, the most distant, the most insignificant, or the most estranged member of our Menno family unmentioned or unknown. Hence my widespread statistical researches in Russia, Europe, and America. And so I urgently request critiques, corrections, and reports so that I may provide corrections and fuller information in my supplemental volume.

As to the language! It was a particularly bitter disappointment that the hoped-for review of every printed sheet by an especially esteemed master of the language with regard to purity of style did not materialize. Conditions under which corrections were made difficult aggravated the situation even more so that much that is irritating with regard to style leers back at me from the printed page. To that I wish to add that, over a period of forty years as a consequence of my profession, the German and Russian languages have vied for supremacy with one another in me, and there was a

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[2] Editor's note: *Allianz* was the popular name of two Mennonite congregations in Russia, namely at Lichtfelde and Altonau. These congregations separated from the larger Mennonite Church over disagreements on baptism, communion, and discipline. The *Allianz* practiced only immersion, but did not demand it of members coming from other groups; they also refused to take communion with the "unconverted," observing it only with believing members of Protestant groups: hence, the name *Allianz* churches. This group tried to serve as a bridge between the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren groups in Russia. See Part I, §420.

time when my German did not want to flow properly. Add to that: twenty-five years of work with literary sources, nine-tenths of which can truly be said not to be classical!

Nor is the outward appearance enhanced by the large sections in fine print. But it was my passionate desire to present the reader, especially the researcher, with as much material as possible so that he could see how matters stood and stand. Without this book much would probably have been lost.

The purchaser will, I think, be thankful to the publisher above all for the many pictures which he has inserted in response to my never-ending requests. Where the text is inadequate, the pictures are often an excellent supplement. In this regard I hope to provide a few new things in my supplemental volume, especially with reference to Holland, Switzerland, South Germany, and America.

I alone am responsible for the opinions expressed in this book. The publishers very magnanimously stipulated that I was free to express my personal opinion at all times. They may well have desired to change many a presentation. But absolute independence was a *sine qua non* I took for granted.

As far as the great question regarding the origin of the Anabaptist movement is concerned, I have personally attempted to remain as neutral as possible in the issue of Waldensian origins; I have merely cited the observations of Menno, Deknatel, Reiswitz and Wadzeck, the Hutterian Brethren, etc. I had neither the space nor the learned tools — and hence the courage — to investigate the discoveries of Dr. Ludwig Keller in this regard. But then the general Anabaptist history merely constitutes the "frame of reference."

May the God of my life, Who in His grace allowed me to write this book, accompany it out into our small Mennonite world and anywhere else He may wish. In His perfection, might, and wisdom He will allow it to be useful as it is, where and how His holy Majesty sees fit. In His grace He will turn away any damage which it might bring because of its shortcomings. I bow myself in humility, adoration, and thanks before Him, my eternal Father.

P.M. Friesen
Sevastopol
between Easter and Pentecost 1911

A.
The Mennonite Brethren Church in the United States of America and Canada

I. From 1874 to 1888

In an impartial manner, we present what is most important about the origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church[3] in North America. Reports by the leaders of individual churches, commencing in the year 1887/88 have guided us in this process. We have organized the information according to the states of the Union in which the churches found themselves at that time.

1) Kansas

§1 1. In 1888, the brethren Elder Abraham Schellenberg and Rev. Peter Wall wrote a "Report about our communion in Harvey, Reno, and McPherson counties, Kansas." They sent this report, as well as all subsequent reports of 1887/88 to the author via Br. J.F. Harms with an accompanying text dated March 28, 1888, McPherson, Kans. — We freely use them, abridging or amplifying where necessary, reporting rather than copying word for word.

The immigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America began in 1874, including many of the various "kirchliche" members. This immediately created an ecclesiastical task; that of incorporating all Mennonites into one membership, if at all possible. It proved to be impossible. As a result, two memberships were organized at the outset, with Dietrich Gaeddert[4] and Jakob Klassen[5] as elders. The emphasis of the first membership was the nurturing of spirituality in the "kirchliche" form [according to the ideals practiced at Ohrloff, Gnadenfeld, and Alexanderwohl in Russia]. *The second membership placed their emphasis on the old, strict church affairs embodied in the points of view regarding conscientious objec-*

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[3] The term "Mennonite Brethren Church" (abbreviated M.B. Church) will always refer to the particular Mennonite church which began to develop since 1860 in the Molotschna Colony of Russia. We designate the entire Mennonite fellowship of churches as the "Mennonite Brotherhood" [orig. Mennonitische Bruederschaft] — This Part II begins with the history of the minority Mennonite church (i.e., M.B.) not, as would be logical, with the history of the much more numerous so-called "kirchliche" Mennonite churches, and that for this simple technical reason: namely, composition of this section "A" was already complete, while the material for section "B" was not completely organized or had not yet been received.

[4] Minister of the Alexanderwohl Church in the Molotschna, a very well-educated and talented former schoolteacher; passed away around 1900.

[5] In Russia, minister of the Pordenau Church, Molotschna Colony, who, if we are not mistaken, later joined the "Krimmer M.B. Church."

tion [orig. Schwertbekennen], *citizenship,*[6] *holding government office,*[7] *etc.* [according to the strict initial principles of the Lichtenau Church in the Molotschna Colony; cf. above Part I, X, "Heinrich Wiens"]. *Not everyone was prepared to agree with one or the other membership. The tendency was always to "work toward a walk of the believers"* [in the sense emphasized by the M.B. Church]. *In connection with this work, the Lord granted revival, and inquiries about salvation became frequent. The desire to pray was so strong that even "kirchliche" members permitted open prayer fellowship. Now the desire for a fellowship of believers became more serious, and small gatherings were begun at which thorough discussions were held. Members of the "Krimmer Church"*[8] *and Leppke*[9] *worked with a similar desire.*

These searching souls, however, did not all choose one way, and that "at the particular instigation of the already mentioned Elder Jakob Claassen, who withdrew later." Some decided to proceed in the manner of the M.B. Church, others according to that of the Krimmer Church. Minister Bernhard Buhler also established a church at this time, because he could not agree with Gaeddert's church, a group [that of Buhler?] *which adopted our form of river baptism, but let everyone choose which form to use.*

"In 1879, the battle increased. Many considered themselves seriously wounded others again rejoiced at the good success. When the first baptisms of our fellowship were held on May 4, the members of the Krimmer Church also joined in baptizing." It wasn't long before Bernhard Buhler founded the already mentioned church, "which now [1887] *tended to go in the direction of the Hoffmanian group."*[10] *— "It was difficult to remain blameless*[11] *in the heat of such a battle and fight solely to honor God. Immediately all manner of contempt was expressed and exchanges originally intended to be positive almost got out of hand. It was our brothers who, in the final analysis, bore the greatest contempt. Still the efforts to build continued." — Franz Ediger from Gnadenfeld, Molotschna, Russia, and Peter Wall, former school teacher in Blumstein and Ladekopp, Molotschna, Russia, who had been entrusted with setting the spiritual direction, continued to work with attendant blessing.*

On July 4, 1879, another 12 brothers and sisters arrived from Russia, among them Brother Abraham Schellenberg, elder from the Molotschna colony. The gather-

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[6] Which the strictest Mennonites of North America to this day condemn as contrary to the principle of "non-resistance."

[7] *Idem.*

[8] Concerning whom cf. above Part I, the M.B. Church of Einlage after 1872, and further below detailed information in D.D. Claassen's report; as well as information by Claassen regarding the "Krimmer M.B. Church."

[9] *Idem.*

[10] Possibly no longer at present.

[11] Such an honest confession is most refreshing! That is how mitigation and diminution of fraternal feuding begins.

ings increased in size, and blessing did not fail to come; although hail completely wiped out the crop in many areas and prospects for the recent immigrants to establish homes looked bleak, the brothers and sisters kept their comfort and confidence in the Lord more than ever. "On Sunday we were so refreshed that it lasted until Thursday [when an evening meeting was held], *and on Friday and Saturday we rejoiced in anticipation of the approaching Sunday."*

On August 10, 1879, the brothers held a meeting. In the midst of all the other restrictions the M.B. Church put forth, another task needed to be dealt with. This was due to the views of Brother Leppke, "who wanted to see everything concerning governmental affairs in the strictest light." After a thorough discussion, they agreed to "go the path of the church in Russia"[12] *and adopt the 1873 Confession of Faith, except for the appendix dealing with differences. Of course there was agitation here and there, but church unity was preserved. It was again decided that brothers Franz Ediger and Peter Wall should continue to teach the Word and Brother Abraham Schellenberg should hold the position of elder. — Revivals continued and the brothers and sisters enjoyed many a blessing. Twenty-six new members were added by baptism.*

On November 5, they decided to build a meetinghouse: the intention was to transport stones for the foundation in winter and begin construction in the spring of 1880. In spite of much poverty, some money was collected and 200 rubles were sent from the Molotschna in Russia.

Although there were conflicts with other fellowships, the church grew and things continued calmly in the spiritual domain. In 1880, the brothers Gerhard Franz and Jakob Richert were elected as teachers. Heinrich Voth and Franz Toews were elected and later consecrated for relief work.

The church was now organized and enjoying many a blessing, but then it passed through a testing period during which incidents occurred "which led us to examine ourselves whether we were clinging to the Lord with all our heart or whether something dearer could lead us to digress from His way." "We, a people accustomed to narrow restrictions, were not used to the many enticements available to us in this free country of America. Initially, this induced our youth to lead a carnal life under spiritual pretenses." — "There followed years of great blessing in worldly affairs; these also resulted in much testing and we were not capable of remaining rational. Many trusted excessively in worldly affluence and were enticed to undertake great enterprises along temporal lines. The first test cost us some young men, the second, the spiritual reputation of many a brother. When we again reaped a poor harvest, we realized our errant ways. Now, in 1888, we still have not recovered from all the harm and blessing from above will be needed to help us regain what we lost. The need was to diversify in the workplace, to assemble anew as a fellowship, and to

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[12] I.e., to hold office as required by civil order and reject military service, but not to condemn those true Christians who have different opinions in that regard.

learn to know each other under the new conditions, customs, and regulations of this country. Before we, as an inexperienced church in this country, understood what was involved, we had failed in many respects; and the difficulties experienced as a result take a long time to heal. Still, it has pleased the dear Lord to preserve us in His grace; so we are still here, and even through all times and sorrows, He has granted us the blessing of His precious Word and the comfort of the Holy Spirit." — "There have been only small revivals lately; we have celebrated fewer baptisms than at the beginning. Nevertheless, we have again enjoyed times of special blessing: thanksgiving celebrations and mission festivals connected with love feasts often offered provender on life's way."

According to the January 1888 statistics, membership of this church[13] *in Harvey, Reno, and McPherson counties, Kans., numbered 150 souls, most of whom were baptized here. "During this entire period, we have lost ten souls, who even now are living apart from our church; that is painful, but it happens!"*

"We have not described conflicts occasioned by strange doctrines in detail; we just wanted to make a brief contribution to our history. The church is still struggling and beseeches the Lord: Your kingdom come!" [1884].

§2 2. **Report of the history of the Mennonite Brethren Church at Ebenfeld, Marion County, Kans.** (submitted by brother D.D. Claassen, minister, former resident of the Kuban).

In 1875, the first two families who were members of the Mennonite Brethren Church left Russian soil and immigrated to America. — Upon arrival in Kansas, USA, they already found the "Krimmer Brethren Church" there under the leadership of Elder Jakob Wiebe, who had emigrated a year earlier and had also settled in Kansas. — One can well imagine how difficult it was for two families to maintain themselves, especially with respect to spiritual matters, in a new country with strange people and language, and far removed from the mother church. Attempts were made as circumstances allowed to fellowship with the brothers and sisters of the "Krimmer Church." That did not work too well for the reason that "as history from Russia teaches, the latter took a separate position [?], *regarding the form of baptism from the very beginning of its existence in order, as I learned from a reliable source, to prevent merging with our M.B. Church. — The Lord cares for His own."*

In the fall of 1875, Brother Peter Eckert, elder, and a few families who were members arrived from the Volga region and settled near the "Krimmer Church." Br. Eckert could not approve of the fact that two fellowships of believers living side by side could not unite. Work to bring about a merger was undertaken on the basis of the word spoken by the Lord Jesus: "Father, I want them all to be one." To that end, brethren from the east, Illinois, arrived and, as intermediaries, energetically

[13] Which, under the leadership of the elder, became the leading church in North America for many years.

tackled the matter of association. — As mentioned above, the fellowship differed with regard to the form of baptism: The "Krimmer Church" baptized forward in water, with the person kneeling, while Eckert's Church (as the M.B. Church was called at that time) baptized backward by immersion, with the person standing. It was difficult to do anything in this regard, each fellowship insisted on maintaining its position.[14] *After long hours of work and study*[15] *of the Word of God, the "Krimmer Church" gave up its form of baptism and acknowledged the backward form as the correct one. With that, however, conditions were imposed on Eckert's Church. For example, if anyone believed in the millennium and claimed to have knowledge concerning the same from God's Word, that knowledge could not be taken from him, but he was forbidden to talk about it and, especially, teach it. Music was declared to be a sin and so was completely abolished. — The brothers and the sisters from the Volga region* [almost all non-Mennonites, most of them a product of the 1860 missionary work of Becker and Bartel] *had been accustomed to greet each other with a kiss.*[16] *This proved to become one of the most difficult points of agreement because already in the Volga region of Russia they had been taught that God's Word commanded it. This "harmful kiss," as it came to be called, was also abolished, although the Volga Region brothers and sisters clung to it very firmly. Brother Eckert worked more energetically than ever and it was passed. With all hindrances before them removed they decided to take the step of unification. Elder Wiebe had not been confirmed in his office by laying on of hands, so Elder Eckert was to perform the act for him. But since both were to remain elders, the question became crucial, who of the two should be the first*[17] *functioning head. The result was that on the very day on which unification was to be enacted, Elder Wiebe and most of the brethren withdrew and returned to their form of baptism. Ten families, however, remained faithful to what had been agreed upon at the consultation and joined the M.B. Church. — Now there were some persons who had become believers at this time and been examined in "Wiebe's Church." They were served with baptism in "Eckert's Church" and thus became the firstfruits of the M.B. Church, which at the time numbered about thirty families. The meeting was held in a district school, while the "Krimmer Church" held its meeting in a private school.*

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[14] It is really shameful. The matter had already been solved in Russia; the M.B. Church of Friedensfeld had accepted members of the "Krimmer Church" as members without baptizing them again, thus recognizing their baptism.

[15] For our point of view concerning the insignificance of this question, see above Part I, XX, "Baptism."

[16] It is embarrassing to write such stuff! After the horrifying experiences in Russia in 1862! And after the 1865 June reform! — It must be remembered that the Volga delegates had promised to drop the "sister kiss" when they were accepted into the conference at the 1874 convention in Andreasfeld. Cf. Part I, XXX.

[17] "Who was the greatest," Mark 9:33! Leadership depends on special giftedness, not on the receiving or performing of ordination! How unevangelical!

In the summer of 1876, many brothers and sisters followed from Russia. About 75 families were from the Kuban. Some were from the Chortitza colonies, but most of them were from the Volga region. The latter, as well as those from the Kuban, joined the church upon arrival, while the Chortitza brothers and sisters preferred to remain somewhat separate, "and that because the church here judged anyone very severely who still fellowshipped with the Baptists.[18] *In this regard, the Chortitza brethren were not so strict, having already stood in intimate union with many Baptists in Russia. Just as everything loses its sharpness with time, so it was also lost in this case; and the brethren joined the church later as well." — Now there was new work to be done because the brethren from the Volga, who had come later and now made up the majority, could not come to terms with the above-mentioned agreements, so the particular opinions of those from the Volga were again brought up at the first consultative meeting. They were strongly supported by the later arrivals. "Even Br. Eckert* [!] *supported this standpoint again and attempted to induce the others, who wanted to hold to the agreement to allow each one to 'live out his faith,'* [?!] *especially with regard to the sister kiss* [!] *and music" . . . The brethren from the Volga had no independent knowledge concerning election and the millennium, so in this respect it was more the later-arrived brethren of Mennonite descent who did not support the agreement. All this did not make a good impression on the members from Wiebe's church, so seven of the above-mentioned ten families returned to their former church at the first opportunity. But even at later times, it was almost always this odd conviction of those from the Volga, which was brought up at consultative meetings.*[19]

In 1877, shortly before New Year's until Easter, some fifty persons became believers and were added to the church by baptism. Most of them were children of members, with some strangers among them.

In 1878, Edward Leppke, already known as itinerant preacher in Russia, came from the Don River region together with some families who were members. — Since the members of his group had advised him not to join the Eckert Church immediately upon arrival, he used the opportunity, assumed the position of leading elder, and attempted to draw members of Eckert's church over to himself;[20] *he succeeded in only a few cases.*

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[18] Cf. Einlage Church, Part I, XXIX.

[19] The author has never heard the question discussed, since his baptism in Russia in 1866. It was solved! Evidently, Br. Eckert and his supporters had not brought along anything wholesome from the Volga. This breakup of the initial church organization by the Mennonite Brethren in America — before the arrival of A. Schellenberg — was the gracious leading of God.

[20] So this extremist, already shaken off in Russia, had to be "enjoyed" in America again. All that was destructive had to be fought through, wrestled down, and removed again. All the sickly elements again sought to gain acceptance of their points of view in the new world. But the calm, healthy majority remained true to the plan.

"But everything has its time and every undertaking under heaven its hour. In 1879, Elder Abraham Schellenberg, with a number of families who were members, arrived from the Molotschna, Russia, and settled in Harvey County, Kans.," where some family members, who had been baptized by Leppke, resided and had come to understand they now belonged to the alliance of all the congregations. Brother Schellenberg proved to be the man they needed, and with that the intended separate position was eliminated. In the same year, Br. Abraham Cornelssen[21] arrived with a number of families from the Don region and joined the church. Since in the Don region he had led the church as provisional elder, he was similarly active here and assisted Br. Eckert as much as he could. The newly arrived brothers and sisters did, however, occasion new work. The Christians from the Volga region had always been dealt with [relative to the often-broached foolish matter]; *they often appeared to be willing to drop it, and the new brethren from the Don region had no other thoughts than to convince them of their error. Although they did not succeed, there were always persons who fanned the flames. Peter Gaede,[22] who had arrived in 1879, had been active in causing divisions in the church in the Kuban Russia. He also attempted to make his influence felt in the new country. He did so, rather successfully, and a number of the Volga members withdrew, joining up with Gaede.[23]— Leppke continued in his ways, but was unable to cause particular harm to the M.B. Church. Leppke himself, when he saw that he would be left alone, had joined Wiebe's church even before the above mentioned members and toiled, as strength permitted, in the cause of "forward baptism"![24]*

"New work was in the offing, however. Janicka, a Baptist elder, who was entirely unacquainted with the M.B. denomination,[25] made it his job, as far as he was able, to persuade people of the correctness of the Baptist position. He succeeded in the case of some from the Volga as well as some from the Don who joined the Baptists. All this subversive and disruptive activity appeared to have completely dislodged Br. Eckert from his position, so he carried on discontented in the church. The work was now entrusted to Br. Abraham Cornelssen. Br. Eckert finally withdrew entirely, sold his farm, and took up a business."

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[21] Author and joint signatory with the Molotschna brethren of the founding document of January 6, 1860.

[22] Who belonged to the group led by Hermann Peters and the Jaeckel brothers. Cf. above, Part I, XXIX.

[23] Thereby purging the church of unsound ideas began in earnest here. A large part of this group has joined the Adventists.

[24] Leppke later joined the Adventists.

[25] The M.B.'s in America have enjoyed the heartiest of harmony with Br. August Liebig for many years, so that, as often happened in Russia, he has repeatedly directed their Bible school for ministers.

In 1883, some more member families arrived from the Don region, among them Br. Johann Foth,[26] who had been entrusted with the leadership in the Don region after Br. Cornelssen emigrated. Br. Cornelssen had been unwell for a considerable period of time, so Br. Foth was given the work of provisional elder. The brothers and sisters from the Volga had scattered. Only a few remained in the church, some had joined the Baptists and most had sided with Peter Gaede. — In 1885, Br. Abraham Schellenberg ordained Br. Johann Foth as elder. Now the church had peace for a time and the Lord granted grace to prosper and proceed peacefully. That was not to be for long, however, "for there were always individuals, about whom the apostle had predicted, that would not spare the flock."

In this instance, the Adventists attempted to infect the church with their doctrine. It was generally thought that no one would accept their teaching, but there were those again who lent an ear. "They were successful only in the case of those who had loose connections with the fellowship or had lost firmness because they had changed their affiliation earlier." Most of the former Volga residents, including Peter Gaede, adopted Adventist teachings. Eduard Leppke also became persuaded of their correctness and joined the Adventists! "Br. Eckert, who, after withdrawing from the church, tended to agree with the Baptists, does not at present consider himself a member of any fellowship because, for him, none is liberal[27] enough. He considers the doctrine of the Adventists as harmful as well."

As stated above, the church held its meetings in a district school [state public school], *"which it lost through the instigation of certain people." As a result, the church saw the need for building a meetinghouse, which was undertaken in 1883. Although the available means were limited, the required money was raised. The dimensions of the house were 48' x 28'.[28] The church realized very soon that the house was too small and in 1884 decided to add a 28' x 36' wing on one side. The whole house cost $2,000. By God's grace it is now debt-free.*

In 1888, staff and members of the "Ebenfeld" church in Marion County, Kansas, consisted of the following: one elder, Br. Johann Foth; four teachers, Br. William Hergert, D.D. Claassen, Abraham Cornelssen Jr., and Theodore Fruechting; three deacons, Br. Abraham Eidsen, August Stelting, and Heinrich

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[26] Not as a born Mennonite. Cf. above, Part I, regarding Cornelssen and Foth, "Church on the Plain and in the Don River region," §236.

[27] Broadminded.

[28] In America, that appears to be the general type of small, wooden, rural churches. Highly practical tents are used for large festive gatherings. The author finds this approach very good. He has often entertained the thought that attendance at worship services should be cut in half as soon as the number reaches 100 persons. In a living church with an evangelical-fraternal form of worship, there are always members who are gifted to lead. By the way, the M.B.'s have learned to maintain a brotherly, home-like atmosphere in auditoriums seating 1,000 and more, and to meet in many small congregations in addition to the large ones.

Bartel; and 253 church members, about half of whom are of Mennonite and the other half of Lutheran descent.

3. **Marion, Kansas** (by the same reporter). §3

The members from the Volga region included Br. Jakob Ehrlich and a few others who wanted to practice their faith according to our interpretation of Scripture and found it depressing that brethren of their ethnic group separated from them. These brothers and sisters remained faithful to our fellowship and continued to be edified. They established a church near Marion, Kans., and north of Marion, where Br. Jakob Ehrlich[29] *officiates as elder. Other brethren assist him. Membership stands at 43 souls. To have the courage to persevere on the job in the face of such pain of separation requires strength from above. The report from Ebenfeld includes details regarding the conflicts* [among the former Volga residents].

The reader is advised to compare the **report from Culbertson**, Nebraska (following below), where another M.B. Church drawn from the midst of the **Volga members** exists.

4. **Regarding the history of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Marion and Woodson Counties, Kansas; place of origin Chortitza-Einlage** (we have, together with the above, received the following unsigned report, apparently from Minister Cornelius Hiebert). §4

In the spring of ***1876****, nineteen families immigrated to America (to Marion County, Kansas). Almost all of them were members of the Chortitza-Einlage M.B. Church and knew members of the church who had immigrated and settled there earlier. These people now met them. — The immigrants could not immediately join*[30] *the church, since they were criticized in Kansas, because they did not hold to the principle of non-resistance quite as strictly in Russia and had fellowshipped with some Baptist members. They promised, however, to abide by the regulations in force at the time. Eduard Leppke's suspicions expressed by letter from Russia contributed a lot to the situation.*

In the spring of 1877, these brothers and sisters in Woodson County, Kans., had found low-cost land and settled there: about 20 families, of whom some were from the Kuban. Some of those from the Chortitza colony preferred to stay in Marion County, among them Br. Cornelius Hiebert, who had already been the spiritual mentor of the little group in Russia. To continue spiritual growth, the brothers and sisters in Woodson County made Br. Abraham Neufeld from the Kuban, Russia, their leader; and looking to God, they attempted to establish a home, which was very difficult and possible only through many struggles and much self-denial. That meant

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[29] Joined the Baptist Union together with his church after 1900.

[30] Cf. above §2, report by D.D. Claassen.

hard work with respect to earthly as well as spiritual matters; with respect to the first, almost all the members were penniless, with regard to the latter, deviation from the Word of God occurred. The fact that the small group had come together from different churches was the cause of much disagreement.

The problem,[31] *which led to the "distancing" between the small church and the church in Marion County, was less acute in the spring, because a number of things had been revealed as they really were. As a result, three brethren, Peter Eckert, Jakob Ehrlich, and George Seibel, were sent to Woodson County. This led to the unity so desired by them. — The small church had earlier already sought to collect contributions for missions in accordance with God's Word,*[32] *1 Corinthians 16:2; a Sunday school was established.*

In the fall of 1878, a revival took place among the youth of the church. As a result, most of them experienced a spiritual awakening. Speaking from a spiritual perspective, spring had arrived for the small group. This refreshing from the Lord led to a greater tendency to forget the disputes and what otherwise interfered with the work; there were more glorious things to do than dwell on the weaknesses and errors of members. At this time, Br. Abraham Neufeld resigned from his position, so Br. Bernhard Pauls and Br. David Dyck were elected as teachers; and the old deacon, Br. B. Nickel,[33] *was called to assist in Bible teaching.*

On February 9, 1879, 18 persons were baptized. Blessings continued. In the spring of that year, a school house was built in the middle of the settlement. Various baptisms were celebrated later, contributing to growth of the small group.

Early in the winter of 1881, Elder Abraham Schellenberg, accompanied by the brethren Abraham Eidsen and Jakob Loewen, visited the church; it was the occasion when the brethren Pauls and Dyck were confirmed in their position as teachers. In 1883, Br. Pauls lost his ability to speak due to a throat ailment and Br. Nickel withdrew somewhat because of his advancing years. So the members felt obliged to employ another worker. The election resulted in an equal number of votes for the two brothers, Kornelius and Peter Nickel, so the church agreed to employ both for the time being.

In 1844, Br. David Dyck was called to Lehigh, Marion County, where some had moved earlier and some arrived later [cf. C.P. Wedel's report below]. — *In 1885, Br. Pauls also moved away. For this reason, new leadership needed to be put in place. The brethren, Abraham Schellenberg and David Dyck, arrived to help them with this. The election again resulted in the same number of votes for the two Nickel brothers. After mature reflection, they were then consecrated as teachers of the Woodson County group on November 23, 1887.*

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[31] Mennonite opinions exaggerated to the point of the pathological.

[32] Fruit of the good order in the Einlage Church.

[33] Ordained by Oncken in Einlage in 1869.

For almost the entire period, the brothers and sisters of this group supported foreign missions in India. They also contributed toward the work of the Bible Society, sought to distribute tracts in the neighborhood, and, for a number of years, had a brother function as itinerant preacher for three months of the year.

At present [1888]*, the small group has 52 members, a Sunday school attended by 40–50 children, and a well-attended women's group.* [The Lehigh, Marion County, Kans., group may be an essential branch of the Chortitza-Einlage Church?] *"The Lord has visibly preserved His people. Praise be to Him!"*

5. **Report on the origin of the station of the so-called Alexanderwohl brothers and sisters in Kansas, USA** [reported by Elder Cornelius P. Wedel]. §5

In 1880, a number of people from the so-called "Alexanderwohl settlement" began to gather more frequently to experience spiritual edification as a church by studying God's Word. The name "Alexanderwohl" had been inherited from Russia, because most of the residents of this settlement were originally from the village of Alexanderwohl [Molotschna, Taurida]*, Russia. Most of us had emigrated from Russia together with those from Alexanderwohl in 1874. Those of us who met together were scattered all over this settlement. Most of us had belonged to the same church fellowship in Russia. At these gatherings we shared our spiritual experiences and were happy and blessed in so doing. A few of us had earlier gathered at various times and built each other up in the faith. Such times are unforgettable. — In the fall of 1880, we were moved to admit to each other that we felt happy and blessed at our gatherings, especially since the* [Mennonite] *church in general did not foster such meetings for spiritual edification. Thus, we felt these times were exclusively a product of the grace of God, who, through His Spirit, knows how to spin the cords of His grace in secret, apply them at just the right time, and bring together those touched by them. We, the revived souls, also admitted to each other that we were all motivated by one and the same desire, the desire to receive a scripturally-based baptism upon confession of a living faith handed down to us.*

Meanwhile, after some consideration, we agreed to call Elder Abraham Schellenberg, who had often visited us and led the brothers and sisters living west of us. He invited a number of older brethren from other places to assist him in examining us, after which he solemnly baptized us by immersion on October 30 of the same year. — We, the ten fathers of our families, together with our wives, totaled twenty people. We celebrated Holy Communion on the evening of the day we were baptized. "The celebration was enhanced by the fact that, for the first time, we held it in the evening,[34] the way it was done by our dear Savior with His first disciples." — The

[34] This, however, is not general practice in the M.B. Church; the church of the Herrnhut Brethren practices it.

communion celebration took place at the home of the dear couple, Peter Harms. — "First love is like a flower which displays its calyx for the honor of God."

Some time after our baptism, with Br. Abraham Schellenberg present, a preliminary organization was set up to help us continue growing in the faith. The following Sunday another person was baptized and a number of people thereafter. Accordingly, our numbers increased, not daily, as in early Christianity, but step by step.— The organization mentioned above consisted of a few brethren, who were nominated to serve the fellowship as teachers of the Word and to lead in the absence of Br. Schellenberg, who lived some 16 miles[35] away. The brethren nominated for this task were Peter Richert, Heinrich Ratzlaff, as deacon, and the present reporter. Since then, we have built each other up as well as we knew how. We were called the station of the "Alexanderwohl Brothers and Sisters." Since then, a number of persons have joined us by baptism. We have, however, not been spared conflict and testing. — After somewhat more than two years, if my memory serves me correctly, Br. Peter Richert and the present reporter were consecrated as teachers by Br. Abraham Schellenberg.

We continued to grow steadily. Several years in our development passed and our small group increased, so we felt the need to employ some more brethren to serve with the Word. We held an election at which the brethren, Jakob Schulz and Johann P. Pankratz, received the majority of votes.

Although we are embarrassed to admit that we don't have the greatest results, our station has expanded. Apart from the young men and women who experienced conversion and baptism, the number of families has increased threefold.

In 1886, our station agreed to conduct the election of an elder. We did this jointly with the Lehigh[36] members under the direction of Br. Abraham Schellenberg. Elected were the present reporter, who was ordained on May 16, 1886, and Br. Heinrich Ratzlaff, who was consecrated as a relief worker for the poor. This was all done in connection with the love feast.

Worth mentioning is the following: On October 3 of last year, seven years had passed since we were baptized and we ten families formed a church. In spite of personal and corporate conflicts and the fact that time has taken its toll on each one, all 20 of us are alive and enjoying fellowship. This has often become very important to us.

"In conclusion, the undersigned confesses: By God's grace we are what we are, and we pray that His grace will go with us and inspire, purify, increase, and sanctify our small group for entry into the life that lasts forever!"

The venerable Br. Wedel, who immigrated to America in 1874 and passed away around 1900, was, in his time, one of the best Molotschna school teachers in

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[35] One American or English mile equals 1.4 Russian versts; 10 American miles equal 14 Russian versts.

[36] Cf. above §4, and below §6 of text.

Alexanderwohl. He was the father of the outstanding evangelist, Peter H. Wedel, who was well-known and beloved in America and Russia (for the "100 sermons" he preached). As a missionary to Cameroon, he died (too early in our opinion) due to the effects of the Blackwater Fever. He was interred in the waves of the Atlantic Ocean on what was his too-long-delayed return trip. Due to the severe climate, his young widow and infant son had to leave Cameroon before their husband and father did. She is Martha, daughter of our honored August Liebig, (now (?) residing in Bridgewater, SD, USA). An older son of the deceased Elder C.P. Wedel is Cornelius H. Wedel, professor-principal of the flourishing Mennonite "Bethel College" in Newton, KS, and well-known Mennonite theology, church history, and pedagogy author. At the time, an American newspaper published a beautiful obituary written by the latter for his father; it is especially "beautiful" because it is written by the "scholarly" son of a lay bishop and one of another ecclesiastical group. Professor Wedel remained a member of the Mennonite General Conference Church.[37] *— The "honorable Elder Jakob Wedel in Przechowka near Schwetz," author of the Confession of Faith mentioned above in Part I, chapter IX, "Gnadenfeld," and Peter Wedel, the first elder of the Alexanderwohl Church in the Molotschna, were (direct?) ancestors of these three spiritual workers in the Mennonite arena. — The memory of the righteous is blessed!*

§6 6. **A brief report about the beginning of the station of our brothers and sisters in Lehigh, Marion County, Kans.** (by the same author as §5).

The town of Lehigh is situated in the north, not far from the settlement of the so-called Alexanderwohl brothers and sisters. Lehigh lies on a considerably extended elevation, an excellent location for a station of believers! "A city on a hill cannot be hidden."

At the beginning of this decade, the town was built on a branch line of the A.T. & S.F. railroad. In America, the railroads are built to extend into the unsettled prairies, so the cities and towns adjoining them in turn have wide, open country in which to establish themselves. The new location and the attendant advantages have an almost magic attraction for the people.

During the initial years of his existence here, when looking northward, the present writer has often thought: "When will these inestimably vast prairies be cultivated and inhabited?" Lo and behold! Looking in that direction today, settled country meets the eye.

The just mentioned advantages: open and in part low-cost land and whatever other circumstances have also attracted some of our brothers and sisters[38] *to the prox-*

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[37] Prof. Wedel died in 1910.

[38] I.e., of the Alexanderwohl immigrants (formerly from the Molotschna), as well as of the Chortitza-Einlage immigrants. Cf. above §4 of text.

imity of the town to buy land there and establish a new home. Some even chose the town itself as their place of residence, irrespective of the reservations sometimes expressed in that regard, especially in view of the business practices prevalent in the town.[39] *— These were not only our so-called Alexanderwohl brothers and sisters.— Initially, the brothers and sisters living there held their religious services and meetings of spiritual edification in private homes. This continued for some time; brethren from various stations considered it their duty to go there on Sunday and serve with the Word, although that did not happen often enough on a regular basis.*

The meetings were also frequented by non-members; the settlement of Lehigh grew with time due to the arrival of more believers and others, which quickly resulted in a promising field in which to work. Nevertheless, as happens at all times and in all places: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." That was the case here also. There was a need to station a worker at the mentioned location. In short order he was found in the person of the dear brother David Dyck from Woodson County. He soon moved here and took up residence in Lehigh. — Br. Dyck has worked there ever since. This need having been fittingly met, soon another one arose: the room for Sunday services was found to be too restricted and so a strong desire to build a meetinghouse on location was expressed. The matter was discussed and plans finalized to begin construction. — There was no lack of enterprising spirit at the time. We, the "southern" brothers and sisters, also participated in the project. If my memory serves me correctly, the meetinghouse was built in the year 1884 and dedicated in the fall of the same year. — Since then, meetings are held there regularly every Sunday, at which brothers and sisters and many others have the opportunity to hear the Word of God. Lehigh was, and still is, considered a mission station. It has grown through the addition of newly converted and baptized persons as well as the arrival of brothers and sisters, especially the dear ones from Minnesota; they moved here several years ago.

It must be remembered that the Lehigh station was populated by families belonging to the Alexanderwohl group and, therefore, stood under one and the same leadership in the beginning. This continued until, at the suggestion and consent of the brethren, Br. David Dyck arrived and took over the work as well as part of the leadership.

Description of the conflicts, suffering, and joys, as well as the greater and lesser successes experienced by this fellowship on location since it was established, is not the task of this reporter.

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[39] As indicated by Elder Schellenberg (above §1), the American business practices, with which our brethren were unfamiliar, cost many of them their spiritual life or their good reputation and strength. But Christianity must be able to live everywhere "in the world" without being "of the world," i.e., being a "light of the world and salt of the earth." Our brethren in America appear to have learned to differentiate between what is harmless and what is harmful in the cities.

7. **Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church in "Johannestal," Marion County, Kans.** §7

In the year 1880, the Mennonite Church in Johannestal, established by immigrants from Russian-dominated Poland and Russia, was now and again visited by itinerant preachers from various believer fellowships. Through their influence, the Lord awakened a hunger for God's Word. Searching the Scriptures brings light and understanding, which was also the case here. Many persons learned to know themselves and their deep depravity, so that no peace was found and a real longing to obtain salvation arose. These persons gathered in various homes, had fellowship in prayer, and searched God's Word. Two brothers found precious peace with God. News of this quickly spread over all Johannestal, for these brothers testified and related freely that the Lord had forgiven their sins and done great things in their lives. Many saw this as foolishness and scoffed, but others feared for themselves. At a number of prayer meetings, persons confessed to having found the precious peace with God, including such of whom one would not have expected it, because they were greatly esteemed by the world. The revival steadily gained ground.

So far, these meetings had been led only by Elder Benjamin Unruh, who confessed that for years he had not been spiritually dead, but like one who, in the dark of night, could not sleep. Now the bright light of the gospel had risen for him also and he had achieved assurance concerning his state of grace. — Johann Harms, recently elected minister, was also among the newly converted and was often entrusted with leadership of the revival meetings. Together with other converts, he was called to searching and ailing souls by day and night. A number of people, at the end of their rope because of their conviction of sin, experienced conversion like a firebrand snatched from the fire. God's Word proved itself powerful, like a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces, like a sword piercing to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow.

The persons who became believers numbered about thirty. A larger location was prepared on a farm, where blessed meetings for spiritual edification were held evenings and on Sunday afternoons. The children of God increased in favor with God and men, and the premises became too small. School principals and ministers of the church invited us to hold meetings in school houses, which we were glad to do. Now Minister Zacharias Bartel also found forgiveness of sins and assisted in the work of the revival with good results. This was in the fall of 1880.

In the winter of 1881, Johann Harms was employed[40] *as teacher in the district school. The Spirit of God moved so mightily among the children that they hid in*

[40] It is encouraging that a large number of our brethren in America, who are schoolteachers, are also in the preaching ministry. With us, "school and church" and "schoolteacher and pastor," can never be fully separated.

secret behind bushes[41] *and in ravines, in tears wrestling in prayer for forgiveness. Many poured out their hearts in front of the teacher, confessing their sins. Some pupils found peace with God, the Word proving to be true: "Out of the mouths of young children you have ordained praise." For many this winter will remain unforgettable.*

"The believers increased in knowledge, and so the question arose whether the baptism by sprinkling[42] *administered to us in the* [Mennonite ('kirchliche')] *church was adequate since we had now become believers. We searched the Word of God diligently and held consultative meetings*[43] *at which we determined the majority vote. Since baptism is the pledge of a good conscience toward God, a symbol of purification from sin, a seal of faith, and a washing of rebirth, we became persuaded that, as believers, it was proper to also address this important rite."*[44]

The question by whom and how we were to be baptized, and which fellowship to join raised new concerns. On a certain day in the spring of 1881, Br. Abraham Schellenberg, elder of the Mennonite Brethren Church, visited us and led in an evening meeting. We learned to trust this brother and invited him repeatedly. He always came. This was true in the case of Elder Abraham Cornelssen and other brethren as well. We also received frequent visits from Wiebe's church [i.e., the Krimmer M.B. Church]. *Seven persons joined that church, while the remaining converts decided to stay together and continue searching for light and wisdom from God's Word. The desire to be baptized grew. To belong to an organized church and celebrate communion was the believers' deepest longing. Various brethren of the M.B. Church lovingly looked after these new converts, who increased in trust and affection. The church continued to grow.*

We asked Elder Abraham Schellenberg to conduct an examination. Twelve persons desired to be baptized in the river. Br. Schellenberg preached in the school house in the morning of Good Friday. The believers were greatly refreshed. In the afternoon, 12 persons were examined in the home of Brother and Sister Jakob Wohlgemut and found to be believers. The baptism took place on Easter Sunday, April 17, 1881. It was a delightful, joyous day. In the evening, we celebrated Holy

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[41] Precisely the way it was in the Herrnhut colony in 1727! The Herrnhut Brethren Church celebrates its "great day of communion" and its "great children's revival" as days of commemoration and jubilee. — What is the situation in the Herrnhut colony today?

[42] Still a baptism by pouring?! Cf. Part I, XX.

[43] In the church or in the private circle of brethren? — No converted Mennonite resolves this question without a struggle, irrespective of what his conclusion is; for it is at the heart of the Mennonite catechism, which we'd like to say, lies in the Mennonite blood.

[44] Does this reference to Christ's words apply to us?

Communion, including foot-washing.[45] *The others could now no longer hold back and submitted their names for baptism on the following Sunday. During the ensuing week, we seriously researched the topic of the will of God. Many hindrances threatened to block the way, but we overcame them all. On Friday evening, the believers gathered in the home of the Johann Harms family. They all testified of their experience and rejoiced. All were of one accord and ready to submit to baptism on the following Sunday. On Sunday, April 23, Br. Schellenberg arrived and 22 persons were examined. In tears, they related what the Lord had done to each one. On the following day, we celebrated a glorious baptism as Br. Schellenberg baptized 22 persons before many witnesses. In the evening, we celebrated Holy Communion and foot-washing, and the day ended in an atmosphere of joy and blessing. We confirmed the brethren Johann Harms, Zacharias Bartel, Heinrich Unruh, and Jakob Kliewer as leaders, and again held the edification meetings at the place mentioned earlier, the home of the Johann Harms family. After the believers had been baptized, a division occurred among the Mennonites, even among those who had become believers. Even the dear Elder Benjamin Unruh was unable to decide on baptism. The separation*[46] *caused us much pain. Still, we had to obey God rather than men.*

Souls continued to search for God. As a result, the young church grew by the addition of five members on the Sunday after Pentecost in 1881. A glorious love feast was held in connection with the baptismal celebration. In the summer as well as the following year, 1882, we were able to celebrate a number of baptisms; people were fervently zealous for the cause of the Kingdom of God.

On September 13, 1885, many brothers and sisters attended the love feast and eight hundred people took part in the meal.

The practice of holding regular meetings every Sunday in the city of Hillsboro [Marion County] *(begun somewhat earlier in a house rented for that purpose), has continued to this day* [1888]. *From the fall of 1884, the brethren, Johann Harms and Johann W. Fast, were the leaders. Later, Br. Karl Foth, teacher and minister, arrived from Russia and in the spring of 1886, Br. Peter Neufeld, also a teacher and minister, arrived from Sergejewka, Russia.*

"In recent years the work has not been very successful. However, even at this time, the Lord is standing by us" [anonymous report transmitted via Br. J.F. Harms at the beginning of the year 1888].

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[45] Which, by the way, is not practiced by the M.B. Church at every communion service, as might be concluded here; but when held, it always happens in accordance with the "old Flemish" rite. Cf. above, Part I, IX, "Gnadenfeld (and Alexanderwohl) Church," Confession of Faith.

[46] Routinely, separation causes pain!

2) Nebraska

§8 8. **Concerning the origin and progress of our church in Nebraska** (reported by Peter Regier [freely abridged]).

In May 1876, a group consisting of the following brothers and sisters decided to emigrate: Heinrich Walls, Jakob Abrahams, Kornelius Duerksens, Kornelius Guenthers, and David Funks from Alexandertal, Heinrich Regiers and Peter Regiers [all from the Molotschna].

We all had friends in different places, so we scattered without counting the cost. The Duerksens, Walls, and Guenthers went to Dakota, the Heinrich and Peter Regiers to Minnesota.

Upon arrival our physical circumstances kept us fully occupied. When we had time to gather our thoughts, we found that we missed our mother church and had no peace until we all met together. We decided to seek edification by mutual fellowship. We were a group of ten persons [members]. *Our mutual joy was not to last long, however. After just a month, the Lord took our valiant brother, Heinrich Regier, through death, reducing our fellowship even more. — When others tended to be discouraged, he had been a great support, often saying, "The Father still lives!" On the trip to America, he often sang the song: "Brethren, we are on the way to the land of Canaan . . ." No one imagined that he would depart so soon. He passed away in peace.* [P. Regier is going to Nebraska in the company of Br. Heinrich Nickel from the Kuban, the reason: "brilliant prospects" there.] . . .

After a twelve-hour trip, we arrived in York, Nebr. Here we built a temporary hut. Winter was near, so the result was pathetic. Our party consisted of only three bothers and sisters: Br. Heinrich Nickel, my wife, and me. We worked together and built each other up as living stones into a spiritual house. However, we increasingly began to feel the loss of the fellowship which we had enjoyed, something we had not thought about earlier. [?] *Together we prayed that God would grant us more brothers and sisters. I must say that, had it been possible, we would have dug them out of the ground. — One day I was working on the mill, the water mill Br. Nickel was building, when the Spirit said, "Go!" Br. Nickel came to meet me and wanted to tell me the same thing. We drove out some 18 miles to the Mennonites, who had emigrated two years earlier. It was around New Year 1877. When we arrived, the people asked us why we came out in such a snowstorm. We told them that the mission of finding some lost sheep of the House of Israel motivated us. We went to a number of places, but our hearts were still not satisfied. Then we stopped to spend the night with a family, who, like us, longed for spiritual fellowship, due to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. In the evening, we shared what was on our hearts. The love of our Savior brought us together. The wife had once been a sister, but it was now 15 years since she, living singly, had grazed "on the mountain and in the woods." In so doing, one experiences the meaning of: "I am come to seek and to save what is lost." — The short hours passed only too quickly. We had to return home,*

having promised to come again next Sunday. When we returned, we found that a number of persons had come together and had acted like Cornelius, who said, "Now we are all here in the presence of God." — We spoke in utter simplicity about our Savior and the grace we had experienced with Him. The Lord blessed us richly and we were absolutely sure that He had answered our many prayers directed upward to His throne amid tears. Thinking that the victory was ours, we decided to hold meetings frequently. However, members, who had had some experiences of the spiritual life, formed a new fellowship near us. In short order, a significant number of Mennonites had joined them, including the searching souls. We let nothing discourage us, however, although only two families had decided to join us. The Lord convinced them of the truth of baptism. On Ascension Day 1877, we had the joy of stepping into a watery grave with five persons. They were baptized by Br. Heinrich Nickel. After accepting them as members, we were able to celebrate communion in the fellowship of a number of brothers and sisters.

We decided to hold meetings every Sunday at three places. The Lord blessed us visibly and, after a period of two months, we were able to baptize three more persons and accept them as members of our church. After another year, we were able to accept twelve more persons, including two who arrived from Russia. So, we continued with the Lord's blessing for a time. We held meetings in homes alternately until, in the year 1878, six persons were added by immigration from Russia.

Because our meetings for edification were led alternately by brethren, we soon felt the need to elect a teacher. We reached the decision to gather for this purpose at a consultative meeting. The teacher would lead at consultative meetings, which had often been handled inadequately. The election day arrived and Br. Peter Regier received the majority of votes. Now a new conflict arose. — A brother left with the words: "Whoever wants to come along, let him come!" — Only a few joined him, but it caused the few of us great pain! It seemed as though the boat had run aground on rocks and was about to sink. But when Jesus commands wind and sea, calm is suddenly restored. The Lord opened doors for us where we saw nothing. A revival broke out in Sutton, 16 miles south of us. We received invitations from there to come over. There a number of persons were converted and submitted to baptism in the name of Jesus. It did not take long for a considerable number of brothers and sisters to gather and build each other up as living stones. But there also, the devil did not rest. Work was in the offing [due to the "children's sickness" among the immigrants from the Volga region extensively described above]. *They called the words of the apostle Paul a command when he said, "Greet one another with the holy kiss"* [interpreting it as applying to both sexes]. — *We opposed them strongly, thereby losing all respect with some. — In this also, the dear Savior was with us and we retained the victory. The evil was removed. Now the Lord added those who became believers. Here* [possibly meaning the reporter's place of residence] *also, the Spirit of God moved mightily and a number of per-*

sons experienced conversion, including some of those who had joined the fellowship mentioned earlier.

In 1878, we received significant increase due to the immigration of brothers and sisters from Russia, some 16 persons. In the year 1879, still more[47] *arrived: up to 60 persons* [members], *who came over from the old fatherland because the years of exemption from military service were soon to expire.*[48] *Now we were together again, although there was division in our small group. The brethren helped us work diligently, so peace and mutual harmony were restored. Those who had separated joined the group again.*

Once the offences were cleared away, we soon saw the mighty hand of God prove itself visibly in the lives of poor sinners. We celebrated baptisms almost every Sunday. — One conflict was in the offing, however. The fellowship beside us, which had blossomed so quickly, appeared to be breaking up again. The Lord worked mightily among them and their elder came and asked to be baptized. His intent was then to baptize his brethren and single-handedly assemble a church. We told him that we only baptize "brothers" [no ministers, leaders], *but once he had won the confidence of the church, the latter could elect*[49] *him as teacher. — The opinion of the brethren was somewhat divided on this matter, but no concession was allowed. After that he withdrew completely, but not for long. The Lord persuaded him as well, and a number of persons were convinced as he was and together they submitted to baptism.*

From the human point of view, all the hindrances had been eliminated, but we were soon to learn that, although we had defeated the enemy once, he is still not dead on all accounts. Again there was work to be done in the church, which led to a minor separation. That was put in order later with some rather hard work. In the final analysis, it served to knit the church together more firmly.

It was not possible, however, for us to remain together. Some brethren, 11 families in all, moved 85 miles farther north to Boone County. They bought land there and built one another up into a spiritual house. We assisted them diligently. We decided that all the teachers [in Nebraska?] *should meet every quarter to discuss difficult cases as they occurred. The dear Savior blessed that undertaking and the church grew. Many submitted to baptism, so that by the year 1880, the number of brothers and sisters had reached 120.*

Since we were now such a respectable group, we were often aware of the fact that the homes provided too scant room for our meetings, so we built a meetinghouse valued at $600, which was dedicated to the Lord on October 18, 1880. In the following days, the national convention met there [possibly the first one in America?], *and it was there that we heard about the Adventists for the first time.*

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[47] Together with the emigration group led by Abraham Schellenberg.

[48] They still have not expired.

[49] One example of the one-sidedness of the M.B. Church.

In 1881, a number of persons were accepted as members of our church by baptism, and we were blessed as we built each other up with the help of God. We often had glorious times, the Lord persistently adding believers to His flock. Brethren who had separated from the church returned. One Sunday, we had the joy of accepting 22 persons into the church by baptism. They were baptized by Br. Peter Regier.

We grew in size, so that at the close of the year 1885, we numbered 200 persons. The following years, 1886, 1887, can be called unfruitful for us in the natural as well as spiritual sense. The Lord often blessed us noticeably, however. Some members joined the church, so that the number of our brothers and sisters has now, in 1888, grown to 226 persons.

On February 1, 1887, we laid the cornerstone of a new meetinghouse. The Lord blessed our efforts, so that we were able to dedicate it to Him as early as October 15, an occasion to which all the [Mennonite] *General Conference ministers*[50] *were invited. Only 3 came, however: Elder Isaak Peters, Minister Gerhard Epp from Nebraska, and Minister David Penner from Kansas. The building cost $2,200 and was out of debt by the close of the year 1887. We exchanged the lot on which the house stands for the old lot which had been given for the purpose as a gift by Br. Peter Regier.*

So that is the history of how we originated here in Nebraska . . . Information that might be added: assistance in construction of a meetinghouse in Sutton, election of the following teachers: Jakob Friesen, David Wiens, Heinrich Schroeder, and Johann Ens; and election of Elder, Br. Johann Regier.

With the poet's good wishes:

Lead us Savior by loving hand
Through this life to the heavenly land!
Protect us, Father, encourage us!
Never will we leave You!
Peter Regier

9. **Boone County, Nebr.** [added to the preceding report by an anonymous writer]. **§9**

As mentioned earlier, some families moved to Boone County, Nebr., where they built each other up and grew into a small group of 42 persons [members] *as a result of new arrivals and baptisms. Br. Isaak Wall leads them as teacher; and members from York County visit and all are mutually edified.*

[50] Cf. below, "Comments," by D.D. Claassen.

§10 10. The M.B. Church, consisting of former Volga residents**, in Culbertson, Hitchcock County, Nebr.** [report dated December 2, 1887, by Valentin Reiber, mailed to the author via J.F. Harms as historical material].

The brethren have entrusted me with a write-up of our entire existence since the Lord Jesus called us to be His people, so I want to begin in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It was in 1875 that the Lord Jesus drew near to us through the Spirit of grace. — Difficult though it was to leave all those whom we loved so dearly (concerning which a serious controversy arose). Nevertheless, the Lord took us by the hand. He wanted to lead His people to new heights. Indeed, it was to develop into a building, offering everyone a lovely sight. — We hoped to be satisfied in the small Zoar,[51] *and so we chose it. Nevertheless, it did not take long for us to choose even the lot of the Lord Jesus, to leave camp and bear His reproach. We did so. And today we can honestly say that we are happy people; many of our loved ones have followed us.*

In spite of all the joy we experienced in following Jesus, however, we had to traverse many a high mountain. The watchword continued to be: Christ, our hero, says, "Follow Me, follow Me, all you Christians!" And so we proceeded, guided by the Lord. But persecution did not fail to arise, and that in the same year (1875).— According to the word of the Lord, we believed that we were not allowed to use the sword in battle.[52] *Still our sons were conscripted and equipped with weapons, which touched us so deeply that we inquired of the Lord, whether it was really in His plan and whether we were to keep bearing such pain. The Lord knows what truly makes for joy.*

When, long ago, Moses found himself in such narrow straits with the people that they didn't know what direction to take, they were suddenly given the command: Forward, into the sea! Then the Lord miraculously opened a way through the water. That is what we experienced. Suddenly we heard: To America! — That country offers freedom of faith, to live according to the word of the Lord.

In 1876, we sold our farms and on March 1, 1876, set out on a trip during which we dedicated ourselves to the Lord in earnest, praying and singing. We sang:

Whoever journeys with his God alone
Always finds the way prepared,
Because He always shows the way
On which His eye keeps watching.

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[51] Allegedly, the congregation of Lutheran brethren was called that. The reporter and his brethren are former Lutherans.

[52] These former Lutheran brethren had considered accepting the Mennonite confession. Still, according to the military law of 1874, those who had accepted that confession in the same year were not granted exemption from military service. Cf. above, "M.B. Church in the Mariopol and Don regions," Part I, §236.

Here, early and late, the watchword is:
Happy the man whose leader is God!

With this Leader we set out on the trip to America, a long and wearisome one. After 33 days, we arrived in Lincoln, Nebr., with very little money left (some had none) and transportation debts on top of that. Whoever has experienced it knows how welcome rest can be at such times: when one arrives in a strange land, is penniless, and understands not a word of the spoken language . . . But the Lord allowed His Word to come true in our case: I will not leave you as orphans. — I will be with you always, to the very end of the age. — He has done that. Although things did not always turn out as we wished, we still must say: "The Lord's ways are marvelous; what He promises, He certainly carries out."

Some of us left this place and went to Sutton, Nebraska,[53] *where we leased some land. We remained there for three years. During this time, we heard that land in western Nebraska, owned by the government, was still to be had. In 1879, we embarked on 14-day trip by horse and wagon to take a look at the land. We got what we wanted and, in the fall, moved on to our land situated 3 to 8 miles from Culbertson, our trading town in Hitchcock County, Nebr. — In the initial stages, things went very poorly in a physical as well as spiritual sense. The first wheat that we seeded did not germinate; the field remained completely black. Just to make a living, we had to leave our families here and go east to earn something. — Things continued like this for two years, but in the third year we had a blessed harvest. What was about to die, revived again. — Things took the same course with respect to spiritual matters. When we settled here, we counted three persons, one brother and two sisters. In the year 1881, another brother moved here and we were able to accept two into our church by baptism. Br. Heinrich Nickel did the baptizing. Oh, how we rejoiced together, when we felt the Lord's presence in our hearts in that way, even though we were only six people in the group. In the following year, however, three persons moved to Oregon. But that same year, the dear Savior gave us four more persons, who came from the east and acquired land here with us. So, we were compensated for our losses. We continued working with the Lord's blessing and, in the year 1883, we had the joy of accepting three persons into the church by baptism, and 15 moved here. In 1884, nine persons were baptized and, in 1885, seven more moved here and three persons were added by baptism.*

We had come to be a large fellowship, but it didn't remain so; in the same year, 20 persons joined the Adventists and six more did so in 1886. That reduced our small group and created a great dilemma for us. But the dear Savior, who wants to make the prayer of the righteous effective if sincere, has also answered our prayers; two more brethren moved here and, in 1887, we were again able to add four persons to our church by baptism, somewhat replacing our losses again . . . [At the end of

[53] Cf. above: Conclusion of Peter Regier's report.

the year 1887, the membership stood at 27, with several ordained spiritual workers, fifteen Sunday school pupils, and one meetinghouse valued at $2,000, without debt. Fifty dollars had been collected for spiritual purposes. The group was an affiliate of the church in the state of Nebraska].

That is how he Lord leads His people through this earthly life, and we, who were about to despair in the face of the difficult temptations caused by the Adventist folk, are even today able to experience true well-being in our hearts. Indeed, we are, even today, able to feast on the truths of salvation proclaimed in the gospel. To Jesus Christ, the true shepherd of the sheep, who allows us to experience in our hearts how pleasant it is to rest in His arms, we as a church render honor, praise, and thanks! Amen.

Faithful shepherd, remain with Your flock,
Father, support Your children,
To save our house from desolation,
That Your grace may be with us!
However beautiful Your light may appear to us,
When it fades away, how fearful.

Help us to continue hearing You,
Give Your speech free course,
Let nothing disturb faith and longing,
Open closed hearts.
And, by word and Spirit, teach us
What it means to truly love and believe!

3) Dakota

§11 11. **Report concerning the origin of the church in Dakota** (by Heinrich Adrian).

During the time of the early (New Testament) Christians, the fact that the brethren were scattered abroad caused the kingdom of God to take root in new regions. That is what happened in Dakota.

In 1876, some members of our church in Russia immigrated to Turner County, Dak. They longed for spiritual maturity. What encouraged them was evidence of a serious quest for salvation in the region at the time, primarily stimulated and guided by ministers of the "Evangelical Fellowship."[54] *The Baptist minister, Wendt,*

[54] An independent, Methodist Episcopal church with German roots founded by Jakob Albrecht (hence also called the "Albrecht people"), a lay person from the Lutheran Church in America at the end of the 18th century. They number far in excess of one hundred thousand members, are very zealous and successful in evangelization and

emphasized the question of baptism, which had the effect of moving the revival more in our direction.

On May 17, 1877, Br. Kornelius Guenther was elected as leader and Br. David Funk as assistant. Four days later, eight persons were baptized and soon thereafter two more. Because the church now seemed to be in order, the elected brethren believed they had fulfilled their task. They resigned from their positions to permit possible discovery of more capable personnel. On November 21, two teachers were elected, the brethren Heinrich Adrian and Isaak Loewen. The former was made leader on April 23, 1878. Our small group was now more firmly united. The members worked diligently, which the Lord in His grace blessed. Sinners experienced conversion and joined the church, so that, in the following three years, the number of church members rose to more than 100. The field of work was extended to some 35 miles. The shortage of workers became increasingly evident, so two teachers were elected on June 27, 1881: the brethren Daniel Unruh and Abraham Voth. — Soon the need arose for a confirmed elder, teacher, and deacon. The brethren Abraham Schellenberg and Peter Wall from Kansas came to assist us. A consultative meeting was held on October 29, 1881, followed by an election. The following day, a large assembly gathered and Br. Schellenberg confirmed the following brethren: Heinrich Adrian as elder, Isaak Loewen as teacher, and Kornelius Guenther as deacon.

Things progressed better than ever and sinners experienced conversion. — The spirit of discord arose, however, with the result that a number of brothers and sisters no longer loved each other fervently and disagreed over points of doctrine. During this somewhat difficult time, an Adventist preacher arrived, held frequent meetings, and won some brothers and sisters. Oh, what depth of pain that caused when the number of people withdrawing rose to 31! That was a serious split and occasioned hard work. — God saw the pain, however, and healed it; the church received increase and the brothers and sisters were encouraged. — In November, 1885, Br. Abraham Schellenberg visited Dakota. He confirmed Br. Abraham Voth, whom they had elected earlier, as teacher. Now, however, battles raged at fever pitch and, in the year 1886, the church appeared to be breaking up; all the teachers, except Elder Heinrch Adrian and two deacons, joined the Adventists, so that the number of persons defecting rose to 79. — This storm humbled us deeply. To return to building the kingdom of God again would require total surrender to the faithful Lord. In the past summer, Br. Adrian was granted the grace to baptize 12 persons, so that at present (early 1888), the number of brothers and sisters has reached 80. These make up three different stations, because they live at a considerable distance from each other. "The working brethren are now confident, hoping, and believing that the Lord will increasingly strengthen and establish our fellowship in Dakota to enable it to withstand all external and internal attacks. May God grant it!"

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missions. At the end of the 19th century, they unfortunately divided into two halves due to the personal rivalry of their first two bishops.

4) Minnesota

§12 12. **Origin of the church in Minnesota**[55] (report by Elder Heinrich Voth, Bingham Lake, November 18, 1887 [via J.F. Harms]).

At the time of the immigration from Russia to America (1875/76), several members (approximately 11) of the Mennonite Brethren Church from the Molotschna and the Kuban in southern Russia moved to Minnesota as well. Among them were Br. Jakob Wiens from Klippenfeld, Molotschna, with his family, and Br. Bergthold, with his family from the Kuban, as well as others.

The early settlers experienced much hardship, because they were unacquainted with the conditions and characteristics of the country (including the grasshopper plagues). They were partially successful in trying to establish their own homes, in spite of much distress and duress. However, a far greater need was present: that of caring for the spiritual fellowship of the believers, so that everyone would feel spiritually nurtured and the group could increase.

The new settlers had immigrated from a number of different places in Russia and did not know each other. They were scattered throughout the area, facing the hardships of pioneers. As a result, their goal of forming a larger group did not look very hopeful. However, the good shepherd, Jesus Christ, who knows the longing for fellowship in every heart, fulfilled His role as shepherd here also and graciously heard their prayers.

The first meeting was held February 11, 1877. The Scripture passage under consideration was chapter 10 of John's gospel. This chapter speaks of the good shepherd who goes before His lambs and cares for them with the untiring faithfulness of a shepherd. — From that time on, meetings were held regularly every Sunday. A Sunday school, which was definitely needed, was set up at the same time. These meetings did not fail to be blessed. Outsiders also came and took part in the simple services of edification, which consisted of taking turns reading God's Word,[56] *commenting on it, singing, and praying.*

It was not long before some decided to join this small group and asked for baptism. This small group now drew closer together and strove to achieve more intimate fellowship. They prayed to God for His gracious assistance in this regard; because without this spiritual intimacy, they felt too weak to fulfill the great task. It was not without good reason that these earnest souls looked into the future with concern. It was now a matter of assuming an independent position, in spite of poverty and hardships, in a country where the spirit of [carnal] *freedom and independence rules not*

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[55] We present the states in order from south to north, beginning with Kansas, the actual organizational center, although the work in Kansas is not the oldest; we reported on Kansas first, because it includes a survey (admittedly very short) of the general Mennonite immigration.

[56] I.e., each person present read one or a few verses: the old, simple custom among brethren, which is always a blessing for honest and hungry souls.

only in all national circles, but even seeks to penetrate all religious bodies. To some degree this is experienced by the church to this very day.

The first baptism was held on June 10, 1877, and four persons were baptized. Their names were: Br. Heinrich Bergthold, Br. Johann Wiens, and the Heinrich Voths. On the following Sunday, June 17, another four followed Jesus in baptism. The small group and the meetings grew as God blessed, and they felt the need for leaders. On July 15 of the same year, two brethren were elected to serve with God's Word at the meetings. Later, a relief worker for the poor was elected. — The church sought to serve the Lord and become stronger in its walk with God, but that did not happen without testing and many a difficult experience. — Had all the members of the church been courageous in resisting the ruinous poison of the devil, many a sad experience would have been avoided. Still, the faithfulness of Jesus Christ was clearly evident. He sent light and blessing into the fellowship again and again. Sinners were revived and converted to Him, a source of great joy for the churches. — With respect to earthly matters, many a battle had to be won as well, so we did not really feel at home in the new surroundings.

In 1883 and 1884, when the small group already numbered 107 baptized members, 44 members moved to Kansas, where they hoped to feel more at home with respect to secular matters. That created quite a gap, especially since most of them were initial members of the church. The faithful Lord and Savior seeks to fill this gap by drawing sinners to His feet in order to let them taste of His grace. At present, 1887, the church has 95 members.

The church was also influenced by the doctrine of the Adventists, with the sad result that two persons, taken in by it, left the way of grace to follow that of the law, and joined them.

On the other hand, the church enjoyed the good fortune of having the 1885 national convention meet there, which served to encourage and strengthen it greatly. An additional cause for joy was the ordination of Br. Heinrich Voth as elder, Br. Johann Wiens as teacher, and Br. Heinrich Ewert as relief worker for the poor. They were installed in their respective offices during the convention. Having its sister churches pay it a visit also served to strengthen the church.

Earthly matters also tended to show improvement. The Lord answered united prayer and bestowed His blessing, so that the church was able to dedicate a meetinghouse to Him on March 6, 1886. Since then they gather every Sunday to praise the Lord together.

When the church views itself correctly, much that is shameful and humiliating is evident. Yet, it can definitely say that it was the Lord who led us; it was the Lord who, in spite of all the shortcomings and infirmities, bore with us and always helped us out in all needs and darkness of night. It was the Lord who always stood ready to bless. So, our prayer is: "Only blessed, Lord, only blessed!"

Let not the church fade away,
The light in this dark world,
Until You return may it stand
Grounded on You, the eternal Rock!
Amen.

5) Manitoba (a province of Canada, bordering Minnesota and Dakota; reported by the preceding reporter).

§13 13. *Since many Mennonites had immigrated to Manitoba from Russia, especially from Bergthal*[57] *and the Old Colony* [District of Chortitza], *our conference felt it a duty not to leave that field unoccupied. The first trip to Manitoba was taken by the brethren Heinrich Voth and David Dyck in June 1884. The national convention has repeatedly entrusted the former with missionary work in Manitoba, which was carried out by God's grace. The first baptism was celebrated on June 14, with four persons baptized. Another six persons were baptized later, so that now, March 1888, there are 10 brothers and sisters there.*

§14 14. **In concluding these reports** concerning the origin and existence of our M.B. Church in America during the first 12–13 years, 1875–1888, we present the following "**Comments**" (which were made by Br. D.D. Claassen at the conclusion of his preceding report and in response to various questions posed by the author).

a) *Concerning our position relative to "Wiebe's Church"* [the "Krimmer M.B. Church"], *the following might be said: Our church was, for long, accused of doing too little toward uniting with the mentioned church. Now, Hahnhardt, who is known to many brethren in the Kuban* [he attended the 1874 convention in Andreasfeld], *and Heinrich Peter Lorenz, two single brethren from the Volga region, took up the task of making it the duty of our church to begin working with Wiebe's church to see whether it might be possible to draw closer together. Our brethren showed little willingness while Wiebe's church wished it might happen. February*

[57] Daughter colony of Chortitza in the district of Mariopol, a volost of 5 villages, which immigrated en masse to America in 1874, with the exception of a few persons. In spite of their wholesale emigration from Russia, on the occasion of the visit by Prince Galitzyn (later chief administrator of the Caucasus) around 1890, they enthusiastically expressed their love for Russia and his imperial family. In the churches, Prince Galitzyn was invited to sit on the preacher's bench, while being lauded and praised in German and Russian (!) tributes, as well as they were able to speak the latter. Only their persuasion of conscience had overcome their indelible love for Russia and its emperor. (To them it was a matter of conscience performing forestry or similar services "as an alternative to military service," which was not considered unevangelical by the larger section of the Mennonites who remained in Russia.)

1, 1884, was the date set for a meeting. All our sister churches elected delegates,[58] *as did Wiebe's church. The consultation lasted two days and twelve points were discussed. Everything proceeded peacefully. Many a prejudice was dropped and, at the end of our convention, our side offered the hand of fellowship and raised the question whether we had reached the point of visiting reciprocally, especially in connection with presentations of the Word of God. This pleased some brethren from Wiebe's church greatly, but Elder Jakob Wiebe*[59] *rejected it.* [!] *Since then, we have, until today* [1888], *taken up no work jointly. We tolerate each other and each church proceeds on its own course* [cf. above, §2].

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[58] Elder Abraham Schellenberg among them.

[59] The founder of this church and its leading elder or bishop. Apparently, the time had not yet arrived for these churches to merge, which would have caused ours to be thrown back into certain, destructive Mennonite patterns: i.e., compulsion with respect to the relationship to the state, rupture of brotherly relationships with evangelical communions, who do not think and act according to the understanding of the earlier "Kleine Gemeinde" with respect to military service and the government (cf. above, Part I, X: Klaas Reimer in opposition to Peter Wedel and Franz Goerz), and rupture of brotherly relationships not only with Baptists or even Pedobaptists, but also with our Russian M.B. Church, which sanctions forestry and similar services alternative to military service and the holding of government office ("when not conditioned by the practice of capital punishment" according to the 1873 "Confession and Constitution"). This church of Wiebe's sets up a particular form of dress (or did so) in the sense of the Quakers (Friends). — The author loves and appreciates Br. Wiebe and the church organized by him; and he has never been able to deny Klaas Reimer, organizer of the old "Kleine Gemeinde," his sympathy. Klaas Reimer and Jakob Wiebe were and are honest, spiritual, progressive leaders for their followers. Wiebe agrees with the M.B. Church with respect to conversion, faith, baptism, and church office. The M.B. Church always grants communion fellowship, sometimes receiving special requests (at times also accepted). The author has always argued for full recognition of this church as a sister church at every opportunity. Merging as one church body, as suggested at the time by Elder Peter Eckert, is neither necessary nor desirable. The existence of independent sister churches with many particular characteristics, who fully recognize each other, is totally and genuinely Mennonite. Examples: Gnadenfeld, Alexanderwohl, etc., near Ohrloff and Lichtenau, Kronsweide near Chortitza. A complete merger of the two churches would be compulsive and not a blessing, would create another two churches: an orthodox "M.B. Church" and an orthodox "Krimmer M.B. Church"! On the present course, the true unity of the spirit will increasingly be brought to the awareness of Christians and develop freely without offensive and harmful compulsion. Thus, the strictly conservative ("old-fashioned") "Krimmer M.B. Church," in relation to the more progressive ("modern") first M.B. Church, acts as a warning agent and salutary critic against too rapid progress, which easily leads to secularization. The latter keeps the former from stagnation in old prejudices. In essence, they are nothing other than two legal parties in one and the same "M.B. Church" theocracy, or two tiny "federal states" in the single great kingdom of King Jesus, or — as Americans see it — in His great union. God bless both sister churches!

§15 b) *When we read the historical records of the church we can determine that our position relative to the Baptists was not a good one in the beginning (in America), because they thought our fellowship stood on very shallow ground and immediately sought to reform* [i.e., absorb] *it. When they were not successful in trying to reform us, however, they began to look at things from another perspective. They allowed the church to remain in peace and began to understand that Janike's offensive* [cf. above, "Ebenfeld"] *had not been good. As a result, our relationship has improved. We can visit them and they visit us; and they tolerate us* [i.e., there is mutual recognition as brethren]. *We proceed side by side in a good relationship, each fellowship going its own way. We also have contact with them in the field of foreign missions*[60] *and we prefer their educational institution in* Rochester.

§16 c) *Our position relative to the "kirchliche" Mennonite believers is, briefly stated, that we strive to meet and accept them in so far as it can occur without being detrimental to our course of action. We behave as their brothers, for example, when greeting each other, etc.*

Invitations to the dedication of meetinghouses[61] *have gone out, as well as requests to present messages. In general, we seek to practice the principle expressed by our Savior: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you."*

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[60] At present (1904), the Mennonites Brethren in America have successfully established their own missionary work in India and they also work at home among the natives (Missionary Kohfeld, etc.). Today they also associate intimately with their old friend, Baptist Missionary Thomssen, sending him monetary aid; and they support the German Baptist Mission in Cameroon, Africa. For the M.B. Church to allow itself to be absorbed by the Baptists is as unthinkable as, say, the German section of Switzerland allowing itself to be absorbed by Germany or the French section by France, seeing both sections have much in common in terms of language, literature, and theology, with the mentioned great nations. — God willing, the M.B. Church will remain the friend and sister, but will never be the maid of the mighty (6 to 7 million-member) church of the Strict Baptists. That's how it is and it will remain so, even though we, now and then, love to help each other with preachers or missionaries, with schools or money. For instance, the author was formally a minister of the Odessa Baptist Church and still retains the rights of an elder or minister of the Baptists, but he has never become a "Baptist," neither inwardly nor legally (according to state and church law, concerning which everything has been clarified with the department of the Ministry of the Interior) and, indeed, is less a Baptist with respect to "re-baptism" than the entire M.B. Church, and by far the largest part of the whole Russian Mennonite Brotherhood [orig. Mennonitische Bruederschaft] (cf. above, Part I, XX, u). The fact that P.M. Friesen could serve as a Baptist minister is evidence of the great generosity of the Odessa Baptist Church and the churches of its conference, and proof that what matters to them, as well as Friesen, in the final analysis, is the core of the gospel, and, to that end, "much is forgiven," with the reservation that there be "no dispute over opinions," i.e., causing of divisions, etc., when serving one another. That was Friesen's only "church politics" in Odessa.

[61] See above, Nebraska, Isaak Peters, etc.

[This is the precise result of the 1865 "June protocol" of Johann Claassen's, uncle and foster father of the dear reporter. He generally appears to represent the traditions of that great co-founder of our M.B. Church faithfully and in keeping with the times, to which the author is highly sympathetic.]

d) *The success of the Adventists has been limited to the brethren from the Volga region and in Dakota. Beyond that they have succeeded only in winning over isolated individuals and we stay clear of their distinctive beliefs. (The influence of the Mormons has been limited to one incident and they have had no influence on our members.)* **§17**

15. **Foreign missions** of the M.B. Church in North America to the end of 1887 (according to the *Zionsbote*, 1888, № 1). **§18**

Foreign Missions Treasury Account

"We began foreign missions in a small way, mustard seed fashion, collecting money and sending it at appropriate times. Repeatedly, Br. Thomssen, foreign missionary[62] *in India, informed us about missions there. We first opened a special account in the year 1885, showing income and expenditures, and made it official by way of conference resolution. Following is the account of transactions carried out in accordance with conference resolutions since 1885:*

Income from 1884 to Oct. 1885	*$525.58*
Expenditures for 2 Telugu ministers until Oct. 1885	*$200.00*
Surplus	*$325.58*
Income from Oct. 1885, to Oct. 1886	*$484.06*
Expenditures until Oct. 1886	*$200.00*
Surplus	*$284.06*
Income from 1886 to Oct. 1887	*$678.05*
Expenditures until Oct. 1887	*$200.75*
Surplus	*$477.30*
Accrued interest	*$41.29*
Collected from private persons	*$11.49*
Cash in hand, Oct. 1887	*$1,139.72*

[62] Baptist, in the service of the American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU). See above, §15, footnote 58.

This account was prepared on December 14, 1887, by the brethren Abraham Schellenberg and Cornelius Wedel.

Note. Set aside for the next conference year $450.00

"The surplus of this account does not lie idle. Rather, it bears interest for the support of foreign missions and can find full application at the appropriate time. May the faithful God and Savior bless our efforts, and may field[63] *and workers*[64] *be found and natives be saved. Yours truly."*

§19 16. Excerpts from the **Statistics of the M.B. Church in North America** until the end of the year 1887 (according to the *Zionsbote*, 1888, № 2).

A. Churches and affiliates (stations) in the States of the Union and in Canada:

I.	Kansas (USA)[65]	8
II.	Nebraska	5
III.	Dakota	3
IV.	Minnesota	1
V.	Manitoba (Canada)	1
	Together	18

B. Membership:[66]

I.	Kansas	741
II.	Nebraska	343
III.	Dakota	75
IV.	Minnesota	97
V.	Manitoba	10
	Total membership	1,266

[63] Cf. below, II: "Foreign Missions."

[64] *Idem*.

[65] United States of North America.

[66] Only those, who were baptized upon the independent, free confession of their faith, and who were not excommunicated (not under church discipline), can be counted as members. — With the American free churches, the number of adherents is considered to be three times the number of members. That makes three and one-half to four thousand persons.

C. Supervising elders (bishops); as much as can be gathered from the reports:

I.	Kansas	4
II.	Nebraska	1
III.	Dakota	1
IV.	Minnesota	1
V.	Manitoba	–
	All supervising elders	7[67]

D. Ordained and unordained brethren in the service of the Word and of the church:[68] elders, teachers, and deacons (assistants in all spiritual things and especially the temporal matters of the church, "relief workers for the poor"):

		Ordained	Not Ordained (Candidates)
I.	Kansas	14	14
II.	Nebraska	11	14
III.	Dakota	2	1
IV.	Minnesota	2	2
V.	Manitoba	–	2
	Total	29	23[69]

E. Overall increase of membership in all 5 states:

By baptism	73
On the whole	82

(Excommunicated 5,[70] withdrawn 19, died 8)

F. Sunday school students 616

G. Church property (exclusive of building sites of the meetinghouses) and debts:

a) Meetinghouses 7, valued at $10,170.00

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[67] Therefore, for (roughly) 200 members or 600 persons (including all adherents), there is one leading shepherd = bishop (according to the Protestant concept, the Formula of Concord calls the leader a shepherd or *Pastore Bischoefe*). At present (1904), the number of elders in the M.B. Church in Russia is relatively half that.

[68] Sunday school teachers not included.

[69] Therefore, roughly one ordained spiritual worker per 43 members or 130 adherents, or one "called" worker per 25 members or 75 adherents.

[70] Only 5 cases of excommunication out of roughly 1,200 members! Almost unheard of!

Debt of $600.00 on the buildings. (Two rented premises; the other churches meet in private dwellings of members and in schools).

b) Foreign missions capital (on reserve) $1,139.00
Total $11,309.00

c) Entered contributions of money last year for foreign missions, evangelization and all church and charitable purposes ..... $1,805.00[71]

With that we conclude the history of our American Mennonite Brethren Church in its first twelve to thirteen years. These may be called its boyhood years. The child has been neither lazy nor stupid in its growth and in its work. Through the process of examining the requested minutes, statistics, and other information, we eagerly anticipate experiencing growth and work during the years ahead until 1910. These years of church growth can be compared to those of youth and early manhood.

[71] $1.50 = 3 rubles = 6 marks per member — not much under normal conditions; still, those were "pioneering years." Other than the amounts entered, apparently, more than a few gifts were collected and given for special purposes by Sunday schools, etc.

II. Brief Historical-Statistical Survey of the Mennonite Brethren Church in North America from 1888 to 1910

1) Conference Affairs §20

An important question for the church over a number of years was the division of the one national conference into a number of separate conferences with a view to achieving more fruitful work. From the 1909/10 Yearbook of the M.B. Church of North America, we present part of the minutes of the convention dated November 22, 23, and 24, 1909:

Expansion of the Conference

"In accordance with a decision made the previous year, the expansion of the conference was the first point at the consultations. All aspects of this problem had already been examined at the 1903 convention in Nebraska. Subsequently, a committee was appointed consisting of the brethren David Dyck, Heinrich Voth, Johann J. Kliewer, Abraham Schellenberg, Johann Voth, and J.F. Harms. This committee submitted the following draft, which was unanimously accepted.

"Since, by way of new settlements, our conference of churches is expanding into Saskatchewan and perhaps beyond in a northwesterly direction, the need has arisen to divide into a northern and a southern conference. This will make more lively participation possible and thus promote the growth of the kingdom of God. To facilitate proceeding in an orderly and blessed fashion and to preserve the unity in the Spirit, we recommend that the following enactments be carried out:

1. The joint national convention could convene every three years. At this convention, we would regulate the following: Foreign Missions, Publication, Education, as well as all joint undertakings.

2. The southern and northern conventions are held annually. At this convention Home Missions and other local affairs come up for discussion.

3. That each church and station contact the concerned conference to which it belongs with its affairs.

4. That the engaging of evangelists from one conference to another conference take place only with mutual approval of the conferences.

5. That Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado comprise the southern conference, whereas South and North Dakota, Minnesota, and the Canadian north-west comprise the northern conference.

6. Regarding Oregon, it is left to the church there to decide to which conference it wants to belong, the southern or the northern one.

"At the 1904 Manitoba convention, it was decided to postpone reaching agreement on this point for another year.

"At the 1905 Kansas convention, final agreement concerning the expansion was again postponed for a year, but, at the same time, a committee was appointed to work out a draft taking into account the altered situation. The committee consisted of the brethren: Jakob Wiens, Johann Warkentin, Abraham Richert, M.M. Just, Johann Foth, Abraham Schellenberg, Johann Kliewer, Peter Adrian, Johann Enns, Christian Reimche, and Heinrich Voth. The committee recommended acceptance of the following draft: The conference is to be divided into five districts, namely: 1) Oklahoma, 2) Kansas, 3) Nebraska and Colorado, 4) Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota, and 5) Canada. The brothers and sisters in Oregon and California are free to choose which district they would like to join. Br. D.D. Claassen moves that this draft be accepted with the proviso that each district be free to join another district if necessary and if it considers itself too weak to stand as an independent district. Carried.

"At the 1906 Minnesota convention, we considered the possibility of dividing the conference into five districts as decided the previous year. After examining a number of aspects, we decided to take certain precautions in order not to endanger our fellowship on the national level by ensuring expansion of the conference on the basis of statutes. The need to take a step in this regard has long been recognized. Our field is expanding so much that holding a national convention every year becomes difficult. We resolved to incorporate as a national conference according to a constitution. Furthermore, we decided to entrust H. Voth and N.N. Hiebert with the task of working out a draft of a constitution in consultation with the Foreign and Home Missions Committee and presenting it to the next convention. Carried, without opposing votes.

"We submitted this constitution at the 1907 Saskatchewan convention and decided to publish it in the Zionsbote. *We made sure that at the next convention it would be accepted only after a thorough, paragraph-by-paragraph review resulting in possible corrections and amendments.*

"At the 1905 convention in Oklahoma near South Hoffnungsfeld, the result of the delegates' discussion of this matter showed that fourteen stations — all from the south — were opposed to expansion and seven — all from the north — were in favor of it. After a lengthy discussion of the topic, the majority of the delegates were in opposition to reaching a final agreement. We decided to make expansion of the conference the first point of discussion at the next convention in accordance with the following draft, which the program committee extended as needed: The conference is to be divided into five districts as follows: 1) Oklahoma, 2) Kansas, 3) Nebraska and Colorado, 4) Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota, and 5) Canada. The brothers and sisters in Oregon and California are free to choose which district to join. The constitution was accepted at this convention.

"The draft for expansion of the conference as presented above was amended by the program committee to the effect that the conference shall be divided into three districts instead of five as stated.

"Since there were various drafts which expressed the opinions re. conference expansion differently, we asked ourselves which draft was up for approval. Gotebo, OK, favors the last one, Herbert, SK, likewise. Ebenfeld, KS, does not question the expansion as such and urges that a clear agreement be reached on how to expand. The chairman asks Kansas and Oklahoma whether they would like to join to make one district. Isabella falls in line, Washita County likewise, although they would prefer to see things stay as they were. Isabella adds that they concur. Ebenezer, KS, favors the arrangement of a northern and a southern district. Enid, OK, falls in line. Hillsboro, KS, approves the last draft, with the difference that Nebraska would like to belong to the southern district. Hooker, OK, submits.

"Expansion of the conference was resolved as moved by Br. Isaak F. Wiens and seconded by J.F. Harms. Carried without opposing votes. Br. N.N. Hiebert then suggested, without considering the draft, that the conference be expanded in the form of ***three districts****: seconded. Br. Heinrich Adrian brought forward another motion: namely, to expand the conference in the form of two districts. For the former motion,* ***76 votes*** *were cast and for the latter, 20.*

"Escondido had expressed the wish to be counted with the southern district. The churches in Michigan and Oregon would like to belong to the central district. Manitoba and Rosehill, ND, are not quite certain to which district they want to belong. Determining for them is the time when the district convention is to be held. For the churches in Nebraska, the convention must be held in October, so that conditions their choice of the district to join: the central district so far; otherwise it's the southern district. North Dakota, except for Rosehill, declares October as the suitable month, so does Minnesota. For Rosehill, June is the month for the annual convention. Saskatchewan agrees with that, and so the ***annual convention*** *will* ***take place in June or July of every year****. Br. A.L. Schellenberg brings forward the following motion (seconded): Oklahoma and Kansas with Escondido, CA, belong to the* ***southern district****, Nebraska, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota with the churches in Michigan and Oregon to the* ***central district****, Canada with Rosehill, ND, to the* ***northern district****. Manitoba and Rosehill, ND, are granted the choice between the central and northern districts. The other churches in California can decide for themselves which district to join. This motion was discussed and examined in great detail and was passed with a majority of votes. Various brethren, among them the chairman, expressed themselves to the effect that we maintain the unity in the Spirit in future as well, and that local affairs and home missions be dealt with at district conventions, but all questions relative to joint endeavors be dealt with at the* ***joint convention held every***

***three years**. This was later brought forward as a motion and passed as a resolution.*"

A year-long conflict between achieving moderate decentralization or one-sided centralization (favoring the former) was now formally over. The centralization idea had been so strongly accentuated that one party wanted to elect a central bishop, in brief parlance "a Paul," and that in the person of Elder Abraham Schellenberg. By such tight unity and such a central leadership and visitation system, the hope was to achieve more spiritual life and unity of the Spirit. By this act of "conference expansion" resulting in a "joint conference based on a constitution" with three district conferences, the Mennonite spirit of autonomy won a moderate although in our view, apostolic victory.

§21 **2) Confession of Faith**

At the convention of November 10–12, 1902, it was decided to "approve and accept" the "Confession of Faith of the United Christian Anabaptist Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia," printed in Halbstadt in 1902.

§22 **3) Foreign Missions**

During this period of time, the M.B. Church of North America established its own significant foreign missionary work in eastern India, apart from the small work among the Indians of America (station in Indiahoma, OK), which showed few visible results. The Indiahoma mission was begun by Brother and Sister Kohfeld and is now being continued by Brother and Sister Becker. The mission in India, however, proceeds spiritually and, in fact, in full agreement beside and with the work of the M.B. Church of Russia (see above, Part I); but, legally and organically, it is entirely independent, the work of the North American M.B. Church. As such, it is directed by an incorporated mission society, which is an official organ of the M.B. Church of North America. — The initial beginning was made by the missionary couple, the N.N. Hieberts, in the year 1899(?). This couple had to return home soon, however, because Br. Hiebert's state of health prevented an extended stay in India. At home, by preaching and counsel, he constantly supported the work which he began, but was unable to pursue. — Before the Hieberts' short term, Sister Anna Sudermann was already active there (on the field of another society) and is still (more correctly — again, after a break to recuperate at home in North America) active there. Sister Elise Neufeld had gone to India with the Hieberts, but, after zealous activity in the school system there for a number of years,

she too had to return to America due to poor health, and that permanently. Soon to follow the Hieberts were the Johann H. Pankratzes, who were joined by Daniel F. Bergthold and spouse, and Johann H. Voth and spouse. Active on the same field are Sister Katharina L. Schellenberg, as missionary doctor for an extended period, and Sister Katharina Lohrenz, who joined Sister Sudermann as teacher. — The convention of November 1909 gave lively and sympathetic consideration to sending new personnel to India and seriously contemplated making China its new mission field.

At the above mentioned convention, the following figures expressed the interest of the church in implementing Christ's great testament for the benefit of the great work of His church at large, as expressed in Matt. 28:18–20:

Income in the past conference year from October 1, 1908, to October 1, 1909, had been	$10,376.33
Cash in hand on October 1, 1908	$6,304.78
	$16,681.11
Expenditures in the same period	$9,912.76
Cash in hand on October 1, 1909	$6,768.35
Special[72] account:	
On October 1, 1908	$209.88
Income	$2,781.94
	$2,991.82
Distributed as designated	$2,933.51
Remaining to be distributed	$58.31
Account closure:	
Missions account [for general current expenditures of foreign missions]	$6,768.35
Special account	$58.31
Fund account[73]	$11,630.18
	$18,456.84

[72] For sums designated by the donors for branches of the mission especially important to them: native preachers, care of sick people, etc.

[73] Cannot be used until the amount of $25,000 is reached, when the interest can be used (?).

Money lent	$16,937.00
Money in the bank	$1,519.84
	$18,456.84

We understand the statement in the quoted minutes: "The state of the account and the reports by various workers [see below] aroused a mood of heartfelt thankfulness for the tokens of the Lord's grace for the work among the natives. By rising, the convention acknowledged its satisfaction with the manager's [Br. D.D. Ediger] faithful management of the finances and with the missionaries for their self-denying and yet joyful work." — The conference wants to care for the missionaries in every respect: it is establishing a recreation center for them in India, etc.

Reports from missionaries (abridged). — These help us understand the orientation and approach of the workers:

Report from Malakpet

Dear brothers and sisters!

Time passes so quickly, one hardly notices how everything rushes ahead, and we naturally follow. I will not say whether we similarly grow in the work and the inner man, which is to be transformed into the image of Christ. The year has passed like water flowing through the fingers and, therefore, we must again send you an annual report. On the one hand, we do so gladly, but on the other, I take up the task somewhat dissatisfied, for we would like to tell you about many victories and conversions, but that exactly we cannot do; we have not experienced it. Our Lord and Savior has certainly desired it more than we did, yet we were unable to entice more into His kingdom. Whatever the situation, you must be informed of the state of our work . . .

In this vicinity, the gospel is being proclaimed by many and often. When our native preachers go out, they can often speak to large crowds as they proclaim the Word of the Cross. But they speak to single persons even more frequently. At times, they have already gone into the heart, the center of this Mohammedan city of Hyderabad to bring the name of Jesus to souls. That must naturally be done altogether clandestinely. There the poorest workers sit at times and are joined by the preachers, who tell them about salvation from sin through Jesus. Some listen gladly, but sometimes it seems that to witness about Christ in such a crush of Hindus and Mohammedans amounts to nothing. Jesus has said, however, that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. It is small, of course, but it grows and becomes a big tree. The Lord can make that happen here as well. So, we want to sow the seed again and again, even with tears.

We have stationed preachers in three villages in this vicinity. They are at work daily, making the gospel known in many a locality. We cannot report of many con-

versions, but we very clearly notice the influence of the gospel, for many are much friendlier than they were before. Many call us to tell them about Jesus. The children come to the village schools, where they are instructed by Bible women, who thereby gain influence among the native women. Two men became believers. Now a Mohammedan and his wife are ready to accept baptism. The way of this couple will be a very difficult one. Their friends and acquaintances are already putting all sorts of hindrances in their path. The husband is a retired soldier and they are applying pressure to deprive him of the pension . . . Dear brothers and sisters, please pray that the Lord may strengthen this man and his wife to remain steadfast.

This year ten persons were baptized. That is only a small number, but they are dear souls for whose salvation the Lamb of God shed His blood. We rejoice with the angels of heaven for the salvation of the few.

Trips have also been made . . . Our brown brethren and I have together proclaimed the message of the cross in more than 100 villages. In this work, we have often been encouraged by the interest in the gospel shown by many, which is made clear by the large crowds that gather on the streets of the villages. An awakening appears evident everywhere. No longer does one want to walk in the old, well-trodden tracks and blindly and ignorantly follow the priests. Noticeable everywhere is the fact that people are animated by a searching and longing for something better . . .

On these trips we also got to the large village of Deverakonda . . . We would consider it to be the Lord's will that our mission undertake to work there if the American Baptist Missionary Union were willing to cede it to us on good terms . . . The field would then immediately be supervised by the Voths. A number of Christians would then possibly be relegated to our care and a number of workers be employed there, which would mean more work for us. We would be happy to comply . . . We are entertaining the hope that there many will soon believe on the Lord Jesus.

No matter how necessary our trips are, they still do not adequately allow us to present the message of salvation to the natives very personally. To achieve that, workers dedicated to God must be employed in as many villages as possible. This allows them to stay among the natives constantly and preach Christ. That is often difficult work and connected with many disagreeable circumstances, for many natives are opposed to further penetration of Christianity. The Lord has enabled us to station preachers in 9 villages. Two are at work to gain a foothold in two other villages . . .

Twelve preachers are at work . . . , but we need more. Actually, there are thirteen active preachers, but an explanation is needed regarding one of them. A man got saved who had served as schoolmaster among the natives. His conversion was a very thorough one. Since he possessed the capability and education, our church wished to employ him as its worker. He was employed and works in a village where there are no Christians. Naturally, the church still needs substantial assistance from us, but it's a beginning, where Christians learn to share in the cause of God's kingdom. That causes us to rejoice and hope that, with the Lord's blessing, our Christians will

in time be able to do more. So far, they are temporally the poorest of the poor, but with time the Lord can change that as well. The Malakpet field has thirteen native preachers, but we need more. A young brother of ours studies at the seminary in Ramapatam. In a few years he can be ready to work. Several of the young brethren studying at the school in Malakpet will in time possibly be well suited for work in the Lord's vineyard. Seven Bible women are at work . . . My dear wife supports this work as much as possible. They seek especially to reach the women and, in so doing, win the children for the school . . . Christianity finally gains access to the families. The women also hold a weekly meeting on the compound here, where they feel greater freedom. God blesses this work as well. They have recently begun to contribute to the support of a Bible woman.

We should also mention that we have begun a young people's group here this year. Not much can be reported about its work, however, since it was begun only recently. We believe this work will contribute toward the development of our brown young men and women . . .

Our Telugu church has 105 members at present . . . We had the sad experience of having to exclude five members from the communion table, but the Lord was able to grant them repentance. They were again admitted to full church membership… The life of the church is maturing as the Christians grow in their spiritual life . . . We know that you pray much for this church, but people here are also praying much for the children of God who support this work.

The condition of the field fills us with great hope, for we are welcome in many villages. Many, indeed hundreds, admit that Christianity is based on the truth and that the way of salvation it teaches is true salvation and blessedness. Even a Mohammedan expressed himself with regret: "Yes, it's true that our religion is on the decrease and yours is on the increase. In future, you will take over everything." With that the man confessed that he perceives a power inherent in Christianity, which he did not find in his religion. This power is the power of God on which we build His kingdom . . .

We would like to thank all of you heartily for the generous gifts for this work, for the full trunks, for the prayers, and for the encouraging letters we receive from time to time. The knowledge that we are working together with you has often strengthened us. God will indeed reward everyone. With this we extend our warmest greetings to the convention and commend the work and us to your intercession . . .

Your brother and sister in Christ's service,
J.H. and Maria Pankratz

P.S. Must remind you that we will soon be in need of more brothers and sisters from home. Let us beseech the Lord to select the workers.

Report from Nagarkurnool, India

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Another conference year has passed. In retrospect, we can only praise God's goodness, which has been great toward us. The Lord has visited us with many choice blessings and allowed His countenance to shine on us, for which we thank and praise Him! We heartily thank the brothers and sisters who have prayed for and contributed toward this work here. There have also been hours in the past year which we found to be dark, times when the powers of darkness seemed to have united to attack our joint efforts to raise high the banner of the cross. Still, light and right will be victorious. May the Lord continue to grant us grace to work in that cause and ensure us participation in the final victory and triumph. It is now my task to present the brothers and sisters at home with a review and survey of our work on this end of our field. May our intention to encourage and to motivate be fulfilled.

Evangelization: This includes our mission trips, tours . . . We have cause for hope, given the developments in the field so far. We now operate four secondary stations. We have also been able to acquire land for the fifth station and hope to send a preacher there soon . . . I am briefly mentioning something to show our brothers and sisters how our workers often get along and to commend them for intercession. The preachers Johann and Markus felt drawn to the village of Attschempet. Since they were unable to acquire land and a house, they had to live in a tent. In this way, they have now already spent almost seven months, and that in an area where it is very cold for them in this heavy rainy season. The Lord, however, has equipped them with courage and perseverance, and already shown them some fruit of their labors. Preacher Sadhu, by nature somewhat timid and reticent, temporarily acquired a small house in the village of Alvarkurty. But soon after moving in, he was so badly harassed that he was just barely able to bear it with the Lord's help. The residents of the village tried to drive him away by all possible means. Although the rent for the house had been paid for several months in advance, they threatened to set it on fire at night while they slept. The brothers and sisters spent whole nights in prayer to God that He should save their lives. In addition to that, they forbade him to draw water from all of their wells, because they held him to be an untouchable. So, he had to go for water at twelve o'clock at night when everyone slept. He finally succeeded in acquiring a small piece of land on which he has now built a small house and even dug a well . . . I would also like to mention the work of Stephanus. This preacher accompanied Sadhu to the same village to work there. On one of his trips, he came to a village especially friendly to him. Tired from the trip, he sat down under a tree for a rest. Soon some people came and asked him where he came from and where he was going. When they learned that he was a teacher, they gave him something to eat and water to drink . . . Whoever is familiar with caste ostracism will judge this treatment by the people as exceptional . . . After getting better acquainted, they invited him to become their teacher. They also offered him a house to live in, and that free of charge.

We did not accept the last offer, however, paying a monthly rent of 33 cents. Stephanus' wife was immediately successful in attracting a number of children. She is teaching them to read and write and what is most important, the way to eternal life... Also working with Stephanus is his 55-year-old mother, Lydiama . . . We reserved the first Sunday in September for our quarterly meeting in order to enjoy the Lord's Supper together once again and, at the same time, to begin with our boarding school... All the workers and some visitors, as well as the preachers' followers, overfilled the meetinghouse. Our Lord Jesus was present with us and blessed us.

It is absolutely essential that we station a number of additional preachers in the villages. We have prospective willing workers, but the brothers and sisters at home need to decide this. We can send them into the field only when those at home undertake to provide these workers with the necessities of life, i.e., daily food, even if only two meals a day.

The boarding school: As mentioned above, we were able to open a boarding school . . . We heartily thank the brothers and sisters for holding out the prospect of a suitable schoolhouse. If we now had two more small houses to accommodate the boys and girls, we could soon offer a goodly number of children the instruction which would qualify them to become capable workers in the Lord's vineyard at a later time. . .

Care of the sick: Much could be said concerning this, but Sister Schellenberg manages this branch of the work here, so I will not say much about it. I will only say that, in these few months, this work has developed into a reputable branch and constituent of the pioneer work. It deserves to be acknowledged and requires support. Until now there may have been very limited means available for this work, yet it is exactly this work, which, entirely unnoticed, opens hearts and doors to the gospel . . .

Heartily greeting all represented churches, we are your co-members of the body of Christ through the Spirit of God,

September 13, 1909 *Daniel F. and Anna Bergthold*

Report by Sister Anna Sudermann

There is not much that is new to report about my work, but time has never been heavy on my hands . . . As in the past year, my main work was with the children and in the school. We still continued to entertain hopes that Sister E.S. Neufeld would return to this work, which she directed so ably, but the Lord has led differently. So, we are very thankful to Him for leading another sister here who will soon be capable of taking over the work.

Up until the summer vacations, we had 70 children. Most of them were at home during the hot season. Just when school was to begin, cholera broke out very unexpectedly on our compound and claimed its victims, a fact already reported. All were gripped with fear. Some children were on the way back to the school and we

quickly sent word to stay away, for the sickness began in alarming proportions. The Lord answered prayer, however, almost beyond our asking or thinking and prevented the epidemic from spreading farther . . . Here on our field, many children would like to come, but their parents or other superiors will not let them. Recently, we admitted a boy who appeared to have high hopes and was so happy that we accepted him into the school, but, after a few hours, his older brother came and forcibly took him home. We now have 52 students in the boarding school and 7 in the day school. As a whole, we are happy to have the children and look into the future with great hopes for quite a few . . . This year we have started a higher class in the school. We have had many problems with two of the teachers and one has left. The others have worked faithfully and satisfactorily.

Since the departure of Sister Schellenberg, I have also tried to help the sick people, mainly women and children. In so doing, one has many varied experiences, but even there I have perceptibly felt the Lord's help. During this time, I have been able to treat 1,365 patients . . .

I am very thankful to you, dear brothers and sisters . . . Your gifts have enabled me to help many, and your prayers have kept us upright. I am very thankful to the dear Lord and you for the tokens of love and faithfulness in the past year, and we also want to trust Him for the future again . . .

Commending myself to your intercession in future, I am your sister in the Lord,

September 23, 1909 *Anna Sudermann*

Report by Sister K.L. Schellenberg [missionary doctor]

Dear brothers and sisters!

Beginning with September 1908, I was at first in Nagarkurnool, in a small way helping out the Bergtholds, who had illness in their home. I stayed there until approximately the beginning of October and, during that time, tried to help other arriving patients.

Upon returning to Malakpet, I was again faced with the work among the sick and, during free time, with learning the language. A considerable part of the medical work in Malakpet was among the school children, but, in time, more people from another area came after learning that there was someone on location just for this work. During the winter, medicine was administered to 578 patients. Later, during the hot season, I spent several months in the mountains.

Even before we went to the mountains, all the missionary personnel held a small consultation about several things, including the medical work. We concluded that the most suitable way to proceed would be that I, after coming from the mountains, work in Nagarkurnool in future. In the first place, there is no room in Malakpet for further expansion of the medical work. Secondly, there are no pro-

spects of acquiring land for a hospital at another location and, thirdly, our residence in Malakpet is filled to capacity now that the new brothers and sisters have arrived.

There seems to be a large field for medical work here. In the months of July and August we administered medicine to almost 1,000 patients. Some came in whose case one hardly knew what to do. In order to help them, they would have to remain under personal supervision, for which we do not yet have the facilities. We do what we can for them, but just giving them medicine is inadequate.

I have accepted a young widow to assist me in this work. She would like to study nursing, for which she is very capable.

Besides that, we try to draw people's attention to the illness of the soul and to the Doctor who can help spiritually, as well as physically . . . This is exactly the work for which I should employ a Bible woman . . .

A survey of my work this year would make it appear to be of minor importance. I did a little here and started to do a little there. It is often a comfort to me, however, that it pleases the Lord to bless the little, if we commit it to Him.

We want to thank the brothers and sisters for remembering us, and to ask them to continue giving our work a small place in their hearts, remembering it in their prayers and in other ways, as the Lord may indicate.

Wishing you God's blessing at the convention; hearty greetings to all dear brothers and sisters.

K.L. Schellenberg

Report from the Indian station (Post Oak Mission)

Dear convention participants!

Another year has passed. How quickly time flies! We are challenged by the question: Have we done all we could for the salvation of souls? We find that we could have done more. Sometimes we have worked too much in our own strength, at other times too selfishly. Sometimes we have said too much, at other times not enough. Usually we have not loved enough. That saddens us, and it is then that we find no better place to go than under the cross of Christ, where we find grace.

The work in the past year was very difficult, not only on our field, but also on other mission stations among the Kiowas and Comanches. As missionaries have told us, fewer Kiowa and Comanche Indians became believers this year than in many years past. One person was baptized at the Mt. Rainy mission. Br. Deyo baptized three persons and we baptized three.

There seems to be a prevailing reaction among the Indian population toward temptations by the whites, who are organizing numerous celebrations in various cities. There they tempt the Indians with allurements of the flesh. They are offered all sorts of temptations for their viewing pleasure. They offer them money for dancing, in which very few participate, but things are getting ever worse. The whites attract and spur them on to all sorts of entertainment, and an Indian has little willpower to

refuse anything. Drinks are also offered them, indeed almost forcibly. In this way, their hearts are hardened toward what is good, for which their souls long.

Nevertheless, Satan does not win them all. With all their depravity, they are for the most part religiously inclined. There is a general prevailing desire to get to heaven. Only the aged Indians still cannot understand that their religion should not be sufficient for them to get to heaven, since they are praying to the same God. Yet we were able to baptize a very old woman recently.

After our tent meeting, we have celebrated two baptisms: two married men and one old woman were baptized.

Last week we stayed near Fort Sill, where we had tent meetings together with the Deyoses for a week, since all the Comanche Indians gathered there to collect their "grass money." The meetings were very well attended. The mission tent could hardly hold half of the attendees. Three persons became believers and were baptized, two from Brother Deyos' field and one young man from our field. We celebrated a baptism on Sunday afternoon. The Indian school is close by, so all the students were present. About 400 Indians attended the baptism . . .

In the past year, we were able to hold a meeting every Sunday without exception, even though the meetings were small at times due to cold or rainy weather. Besides these meetings, we have had four series of tent meetings in another area on the occasion of school closing, pay-day, etc. During the whole year, we held 130 meetings with about seven thousand listeners, two thousand more than in the previous year.

We have a total of twelve Indian church members, nine sisters and three brothers, all faithful believers. They all pray daily on a regular basis and are always willing to testify for Jesus publicly on Sundays. At times it is discouraging to see the other Indians indulging in gross sins and being hardened, but we rejoice in the faithfulness of our Indian Christians and the grace of God, which has brought this about. There are now about 5 seeking souls.

This year the Indians have donated much to the mission and for improvements at the station. The total sum is $114.75. They have also done much work at the station and brought about 13 wagon loads of firewood . . .

At one meeting they all showed by uplifted hand that they are thankful to you for your support and prayers; and they sent all of you an "A-ho" (thanks). For the future also, we desire your support and intercession, especially for our new brothers and sisters, and Hermann.

We wish the convention participants rich blessing at the consultations. United with you in Jesus' love, we are

Abraham J. and Magdalena Becker

The following board of directors of the mission was set up at the November 1909 convention:

Abraham Schellenberg
M.M. Just
Benjamin Jantz
} for 9 years

Heinrich Voth (chairman)
Johann Voth
N.N. Hiebert (secretary)
} for 6 years

D.D. Ediger (treasurer)
Heinrich Adrian (assistant chair)
J.J. Kliewer
} for 3 years

§23 **4) City Missions**

The M.B. Church of North America has risen to the task of establishing a city mission in the town of Hurley, WI,[74] where the Bernhard Wienses, Schmidts, and Sister Katharina Klassen work. That invalidates what we said in chapter I, when we accused the M.B. Church of North America of not fulfilling its duty toward the "white civilized heathen" of the country: namely, to bring them the gospel of Jesus Christ (when there is no obstruction by political and legal entities); and of restricting itself to the Mennonite community. — The annual income for this branch of the missions operation amounted to $1,561.48, the expenditures to $1,134.48. — The nature of the work is evident from the following excerpts from the reports. Br. Wiens writes to the convention.

"The city mission [meetings in premises, on the streets, Sunday school, home visitation, works of mercy] *has a very important calling. By this means, the Lord turns thieves and murderers into upright men. Tramps and beggars turn into diligent workers. Drunkards become sober. Criminals turn into Christian workers. Fathers who have abandoned their families return to them and feed them. Lost sons come to themselves, set out, and return to their parents. Poor families are visited and assisted. Sunday schools and children's meetings are held. Unemployed men find work. The homeless are offered a home. The list could go on and on. We feel the Lord has recognized the efforts of our city mission and blessed it in many respects, for which we are very thankful. But we also realize that this is a restricted mission field for city missions. Hurley is only small and will not get much bigger. In the larger cities, the needs and opportunities are much greater."*

[74] The intention is to transfer the work to a big city; Hurley is a very small place.

Sister Klassen writes:

"I have sought to be active in three areas especially: First in Sunday school, secondly, home visitation, and thirdly, assisting in the meetings.

"About fifty students attended the Sunday school. These children come from widely different families, whose fathers are mainly mine workers or bar keepers. They have, with very few exceptions, no opportunity to be instructed in the Word of God. The students are from four to twenty years old. This work has given me especially much joy. In the first place, I rejoiced in being honored to assist in showing these children the way of life. Furthermore, the devotion and love of these children was very moving. A number of mothers of these children were very thankful to have found a place where the children could learn something good. But a few of the mothers were opposed to such work. Much variety attended the visits to homes. In places, we were accepted in a friendly way, in others, coolly rejected. Various jobs had to be performed. Often we were only able to extend invitations to the meetings, but at times we could also have rather serious conversations with people. We also found families that needed assistance in all respects. We tried to help the poor with sewing, laundering, and nursing. This work requires self-denial, but it also has blessed aspects. In the meetings, I sought to assist in singing, testifying, and praying. These meetings were held in halls, on the streets, and in prison."

It is hard to imagine a more beautiful, more practical, more needed, more useful and hence more "evangelical" mission!

5) Home Missions (i.e., "Itinerant Preaching") §24

In the past 1908/09 conference year, this work had a surplus of income over expenditures of $4,516 paid as remuneration of $7.50 to $588 to thirty-one evangelizing brethren, who were employed "one-quarter of a month" to a year. "For the following year" (!), cash already in hand for this purpose was $4,664. — That is being careful and correct, in "Mennonite" fashion!

The *Calver Kirchenlexikon* describes the M.B. Church of North America as "zealous in church life," and rightly so. Everywhere we see lively interest, firm order, and persistent work in the spirit and context of how they understand it.

6) Publication §25

Publication of the *Zionsbote*, which is the most important work of this branch, is valued at $7,250.88. — The net profit for the year 1908/09 was $1,728.22. Again elected as editor for three years was Br. A.L. Schellenberg (son of Elder Abraham Schellenberg). The office is located in McPherson, KS; but the location is unsuitable, because almost no members reside there. — We have received $543 in contribu-

tions for construction of a private building. The number of subscribers is on the increase (how large of an increase is not evident).

§26 **7) Education**

For a number of years, a German department, supported by the conference of the M.B. Church of North America, existed at McPherson College of the German Baptist Brethren ("Brethren," or "Dunkers": see Part I, §13, n, footnote) in McPherson, KS. This department was directed by Prof. J.F. Duerksen, graduate of the Halbstadt pedagogical secondary school in southern Russia, in association with 1–2 other teachers. The following is stated in the minutes of the November 13–15, 1905, convention: "We point out that it was already decided the previous year that we no longer intend to maintain the German department in McPherson as our denominational program, but will pay all debts . . . The convention showed by rising that it acknowledged the work of Br. J.F. Duerksen and wished him God's blessing in his future work."

In the minutes of November 9–11, 1908, we read: *"Called on by the chairman, Br. B.C. Huebert declares: With the closing of the German department in McPherson, on the advice of the conference and encouragement of many brethren, a few brethren went ahead and founded a society for erection of a college to meet a long-felt need. Since the same needs existed in the Krimmer M.B. Church (see below, III), we united with them for that purpose. We have collected the funds and an appropriate building is almost complete. I am not here to suggest what the conference is to do, but I would like to win the hearts of the brethren for the school. Let us establish a school where our young people can study and not be drawn away from our churches. The building, if completed according to the present plan, costs $13,500. Since no debts are allowed to be made,* [!] *a number of brethren have vouched for about $4,000 of that sum. To avoid making things too difficult for these brethren, we ask the conference not to accept this school as in any way affiliated with the M.B. Conference. We do ask for its goodwill and recognition . . . The convention showed by uplifted hand that it wishes the brethren God's blessing for their undertaking and assures them of the churches' trust in the matter."*

That is the story of the origin of **Tabor College** in Hillsboro, KS.— We present that part of the minutes of November, 1909, referring to the college:

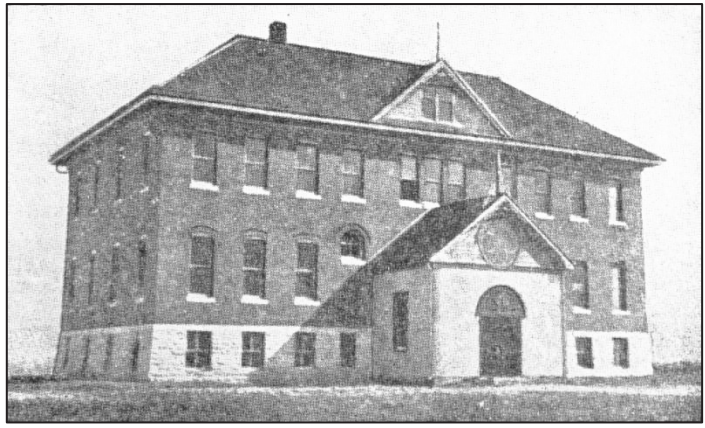
"When the chairman asked Br. H.W. Lohrenz for his comments, he had this to say concerning Tabor College: Among the manifold difficult times understandably occurring in connection with an undertaking such as ours, we have also had joyous and pleasant ones. We are especially thankful to our heavenly Father for protecting us from serious accidents during the construction. The blessing of the Lord is recog-

nizable still more clearly in the fact that some students of the school have surrendered to the Lord in the past year as well as in the current one. Most encouraging is the fact that students have come in numbers beyond our prayers and expectations. For the first year, we expected about twenty-five students, but we had many more. This year we already have more than one hundred students. Among them are many young brothers and sisters, some of whom have not yet surrendered to the Lord. There is representation from eight different states outside of Kansas. Financial support is still incomplete. The brethren guaranteed $5,300 for completion of the building. We are still $2,000 below that sum. It is evident that financial support for the lower classes of the school is better than that for the higher classes, but the support by the brothers and sisters has been adequate. We need their financial support as well as their prayers for the future. The school is admittedly not an undertaking instituted by the conference, but it functions within the conference and will be subordinate to it.

"A number of delegates express their satisfaction with the work of the brethren and encourage them to continue with it. The convention wishes the school God's blessing and expresses itself ready to be helpful with moral and practical support in future."

The yearbook does not inform us how many classes and teachers there are in this college (the term "college" defines an institution in America, which, in its upper classes, is at least equal to our grammar schools).

It should be noted that the "Mennonite Brethren" of North America are in the same position with respect to school affairs as the other Mennonites living there.



2. Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas

§27 **8) The Religious (Spiritual) Orientation**

The religious orientation of the M.B. Church in North America is ultraconservative. On the question of "open communion" or the *Alli-anz*, the church is extremely opposed and takes a position that borders on intense hostility, if one considers the *Zionsbote* as the mouthpiece of the church. During the course of this year (1910), the editor of this periodical has written about the initiators of the "free movement" in a very dishonoring way. According to our concept of honor, and taking into account the Christian dignity of the transatlantic brethren, we consider it inappropriate to go into detail about the matter. The brother editor accuses the leading "free" men in the Russian M.B. Church, in particular those in Rueckenau, of peculiarly low, economic-self-seeking motives in their spiritual direction and activity. But this is not offensive to them; every man of honor here, who knows them, will laugh. As stated concerning the peculiar quotations in the *Zionsbote* of what someone said, it is a matter between brothers. Only "the day" will reveal it, because those whom it concerns have already passed away and cannot speak for themselves. If, with respect to church organization and doctrine, we consider the M.B. Church of North America to be conservative, in our view possibly highly conservative, that does not represent an accusation on our part. We know that slowing down and pressing forward is equally justifiable and equally necessary in every comprehensive organism, if it is to be healthy and flourishing. Although we are more progressive, often radical, it is never our view that Christians, who are conservative and reactionary in form and formula, could be less wise and pious than their intellectual opposites. We love and honor them no less than the latter, although in our thinking and striving, we agree with the latter more closely. A hostility which neglects love and truthfulness has arisen between those who are overseas and those who are in this country, and that is too painful. It offends the honor of God and that of His church, and damages His holy cause in the worst possible way. — This situation resembles what happened ca. 50 years ago: Lenzmann and associates, on one hand, and Claassen and associates, on the other. They could no longer trust, love, and respect one another, because each side considered the other to be heretics and hence "bad." When will this outrage end?! — "May the God of peace soon crush Satan under your feet!" Rom. 16:20.

God bless the M.B. Church of North America with His best blessing! As author of this book, we definitively withdraw our direct involvement in this issue after this section.

9) Statistics and Addresses §28

The yearbooks do not allow us to discern with ease the number of churches, i.e., we cannot distinguish them from the "stations," as is so precisely done in Russia. The November 1909 convention was attended by 115 representatives from thirty-six fellowship groups in the United States. There was representation, in writing, by six churches (or stations?). From Canada, five groups sent representatives.

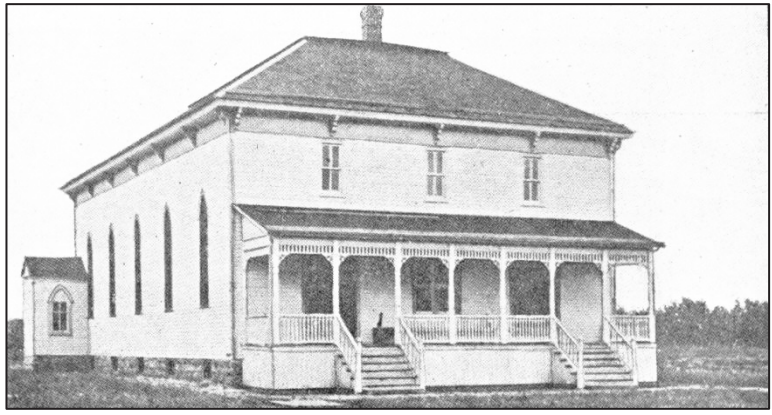
Distribution of these churches or stations over the following states (and provinces):

a) United States: 1) Oklahoma, 2) Kansas, 3) Nebraska, 4) Colorado, 5) South Dakota, 6) North Dakota, 7) Minnesota, 8) Oregon, 9) California, and 10) Michigan.

b) Canada: 1) Manitoba, and 2) Saskatchewan.

The number of members (according to various sources) is roughly 5,000.

The yearbook of 1910 (November 1909 convention) lists the names of 63 "stationed and ordained ministers of the M.B. Church of North America" and the names of 15 "brethren invested with provisional leadership of the stations and churches concerned."



3. The Zoar meetinghouse of the Krimmer M.B. Church in Reno County, Kansas

Addresses[75] of some leading or well-known brethren (ministers): Abraham Schellenberg, Escondido, CA; J.F. Harms,[76] Morse, SK, Canada; Franz Ediger, Hillsboro, KS; Johann Foth, Hillsboro, KS; D.D.

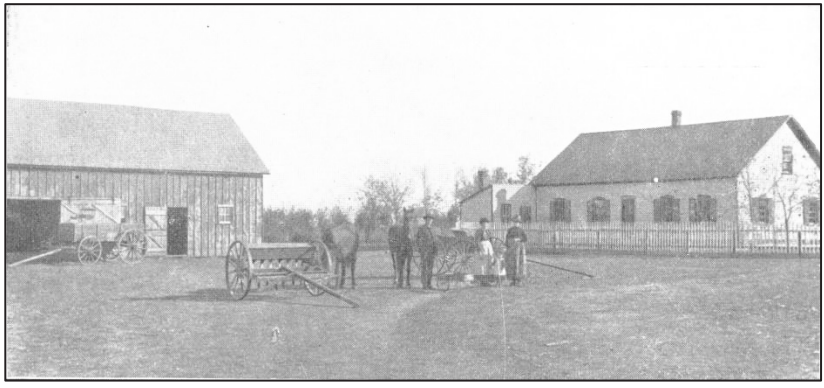
[75] American addresses must always be written in Latin letters.

[76] The first editor of the *Zionsbote* (many years of service).

Claassen, Hillsboro, KS; P.P. Rempel, Hillsboro, KS; Hermann Fast,[77] Petrowka, SK, Canada. (Each of these addresses, except those marked "Canada," is in the U.S.A., abbreviation for the United States of America.)

The yearbook for 1910 lists the following as "our itinerant preachers": H.S. Voth, Dallas, OR; F.J. Wiens, Hampton, NE; N.N. Hiebert, Mountain Lake, MN; F.A. Janzen, Mountain Lake, MN; J.H. Ewert, Mountain Lake, MN; J.S. Regier, Hillsboro, KS; C.N. Hiebert, Mountain Lake, MN.

Missionaries: A.J. Becker, Indiahoma, OK; J.H. Pankratz, J.H. Voth and the sisters Anna Sudermann and Katharina Lohrenz: Malakpet, Hyderabad, Deccan, India; D.F. Bergthold and Katharina L. Schellenberg: Nagarkurnool (via Janampett), Deccan, India.



4. A Mennonite farm in Marion County, Kansas

[77] He is active among the Doukhobors as teacher and evangelist. Otherwise the M.B. Church also shows interest in the evangelical Russians, of whom some are organizing as regular M.B. Churches. They were represented by written submission at the November 1909 convention.

III. The "Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church"

§29 1. This church, founded by members of the "Kleine Gemeinde" in the Crimea, Russia, on September 21, 1869,[78] has appeared in its **uniqueness** often enough in the preceding section. Recounted here is something of its basic activity and some statistics. We want to emphasize that the "Krimmer M.B. Church" takes an independent place beside the older M.B. Church, although, (with reference to essential core and organization), they are almost indistinguishable. However, the former has a still stronger Mennonite conservatism and a certain, in part praiseworthy, trait naturally inherited from its cradle, the old "Kleine Gemeinde." — Its **church activity** is seen mainly at its **annual conventions**. The one convening this late fall of 1910 (October or November) is the thirty-first. For five (six) years the church has published its "Yearbook of the Krimmer Brethren Church"; this year's will be the sixth. — The church is incorporated (as a "legal entity"). Its **missionary endeavors** are strongly oriented toward the area usually called "home missions." For years, this church has maintained a home for colored orphans in North Carolina, where the P.V. Wiebes, H.V. Wiebes, and (at present) the J.M. Tschetters worked or work in succession to or beside one another. (If we are not mistaken, Br. Tschetter is a child of the "Hutterite" group.) According to a resolution of the 1909 convention, the last couple is now to do "more evangelization work." The intention was to "increasingly drop" (?!) the work with orphans. — The mentioned couple, working among the colored, has already gathered a small church (some 40 members) under its leadership. Preaching, youth meetings, Sunday school, care of orphans, care of the poor and the sick, and providing for orphans, constitutes the work of this undertaking. — So far, the Krimmer M.B. Church does not have an independent foreign mission, but it appears to be under consideration. Its contributions toward this branch of evangelization are very significant, considering the size of its membership: the foreign missions account for the 1908/09 conference year showed an income of $3,539.71,[79] expenditures of $2,380.59, and cash in hand (on the October 25–26, 1909, convention date) of $1,159.12. — In addition to that, goods valued at $281 were sent[80] to the mentioned orphanage in North Carolina. This work is counted as "outside" or foreign missions. — Actual foreign missionaries supported are: H.C. Bartel in China, J.F. Strauss in

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[78] Cf. Part I, §36(2).

[79] Compared to $1,832.97 in 1904/05.

[80] In addition to that, we believe significant quantities of food supplies were sent.

India, and F. Hein in Africa. The question whether the church is prepared to "accept Br. F. Hein in Africa as brother and missionary upon his request" was decided as follows: "to support Br. Hein in his work with money and appreciate him as brother, but the national conference was not able to agree on formal acceptance." (Certain people among the established churches interpret what they call the "propaganda" or "proselytizing" of the small evangelical fellowships in an entirely different way. In their opinion, the latter use persuasion or even bribery to lure by any means everyone who allows himself to be caught. Here, as in many other cases, especially with Mennonite churches, we see that a prominent man requests acceptance as member and he is supported with money in his good work and "appreciated as a brother," but is not received. By this resolution, the Krimmer M.B. Church showed, first, how concerned it is about preserving the pure peculiarity of its corporate body and, secondly, that it values persons as brethren and promotes their work as holy in nature, even if they cannot accept them as "members" because they differ from them very widely. That was (or is) the position of the earlier M.B. Church toward missionary Thomssen, and is possibly the position of all Mennonite believers (at least in Russia) toward countless individuals and their circles or fellowships. That is certainly proper *Allianz*.) — Regarding maintenance and promotion of the church's undertakings, "it was decided again to pay two dollars of every thousand of our assets to cover the necessary expenditures of the mission."

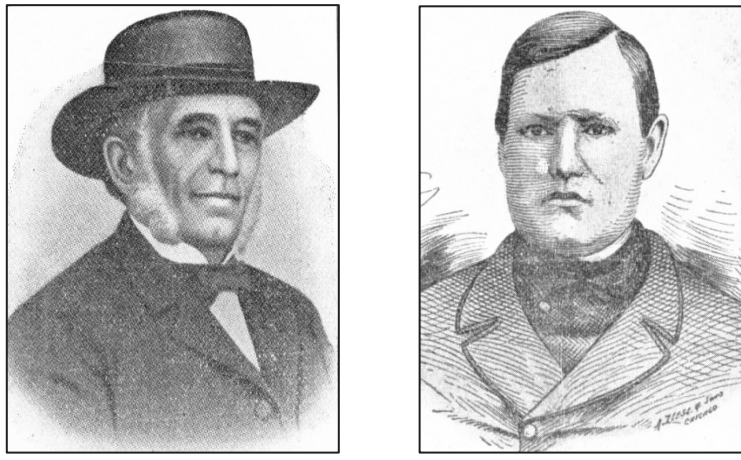
5. The farm of Minister Franz Ediger in Marion County, Kansas

Until now the actual inland **evangelization** was done in the form of preacher visitation trips by the local teaching brethren with compensation for trips (and time?). In 1908/09, this branch of church work

had a very modest budget: income of $279.61, expenditures of $133.34, and cash in hand of $146.27. Realizing the inadequacy of this working method, the brethren recorded the following in the minutes of November 2, 1908: "We sense the need of carrying on more evangelization work." At the convention of October 25–26, 1909, it was decided that the brethren Johann Esau and P.A. Wiebe should search for a brother who can be employed as evangelist."

Another work of the actual inland or charitable mission is the **Home for Orphans and Seniors** near Hillsboro, KS, a very solidly established and developed institution. Krimmer M.B. Church, with members of the other Mennonite churches, as well as the M.B. Church, prominently supports the likewise efficient **Bethesda Hospital** of Goessel, KS.

Noteworthy is the fact that the ministers' directory of this church lists a relatively large number of names from the "Hutterite" church: Hofer, Tschetter, Glanzer, Kleinsasser, Wipf. The attraction of the quiet, simple, and Christian practical approach to life especially typical of the members of the Krimmer Brethren Church, as it is of the "Hutterites," could be the reason why so many of the latter join the former.

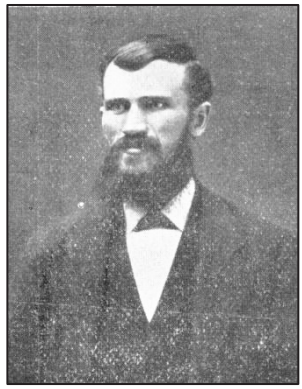


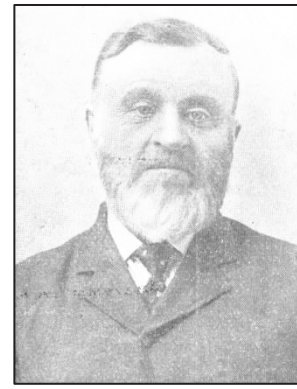
6. Cornelius Jansen, German consul (left) and Pastor Heinrich Richert (right)

2. For a **more detailed characterization of the Krimmer Brethren Church**, here are a few clear-cut statements from its convention minutes: November 13–14, 1905: "Resolved that members of our church lose their membership rights, if they marry outside of our church or the [older] M.B. Church." — "Conformity to the world. — Resolved that we will not conform to the world and will keep clear of everything excessive in trade and commerce such as: excessive land purchasing [bravo!], attending circus and theatre, unnecessary finery in apparel, etc., basing ourselves on the following Scripture passages: Rom. 12:2; I Cor. 7:31; Gen. 35:2–4." — October 29–30, 1906: "Resolved that brethren who own firearms must not display them on their persons." — October 21–22, 1907: "Do we, in our brotherly supportive role, want to compensate for damage caused by hail? — Resolved not to do so." — "What position does the church take toward worldly government? — Resolved to continue observing resolution point eight of the year 1898. It is the serious wish of the national conference that no brethren take part in political elections, except for those concerning schools. — "Are brethren permitted to stand in elections to a jury? — Resolved that brethren may not serve as jurors according to Matt. 5:33–44." — "What is the position of the church as a whole toward so-called life insurance? — Resolved to answer this question on the basis of the following Scripture passages: Matt. 6:25; John 11:25, 26; I Thess. 4:9–12; Heb. 13:5, 6. The national conference has agreed not to take part in life insurance." — November 2, 1908: "Hail insurance. — The conference cannot agree on this point, so we content ourselves with local self-help." — "Resolved to register church property under fire insurance, as each district decides, and to rate the charges accordingly." — Obvious from another resolution concerning election of a head treasurer for fire insurance is the fact that this is an "affair of the national conference" of the Krimmer Brethren Church, proof of the very practical Christian-social trait of this church. — "Merging with the [older] Mennonite Brethren Church. This question remained unresolved."

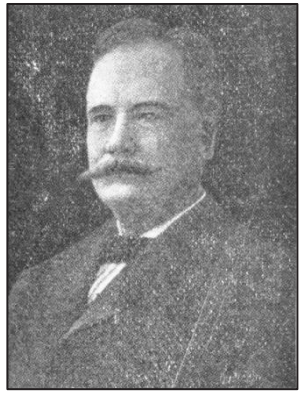
3. **School question.** — This question is not touched on in any of the five yearbooks in our possession (except for the school of the orphanage in North Carolina), but the matter of the Sunday schools is treated as an affair of the church and national conference as in all American churches (confessions). We know from private sources, however, that not a few young members of the church study at higher schools, possibly at Tabor College, Hillsboro, KS, predominantly (see above, M.B. Church, II).

The church had its own **church paper** for several years, but then had to let it go, and instead used the *Mennonitische Rundschau* for church affairs. (The editor of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, Br. M.B. Fast, is a member and minister of the Krimmer M.B. Church.)





7. Elder David Goerz (left) and Elder Abraham Schellenberg (right)

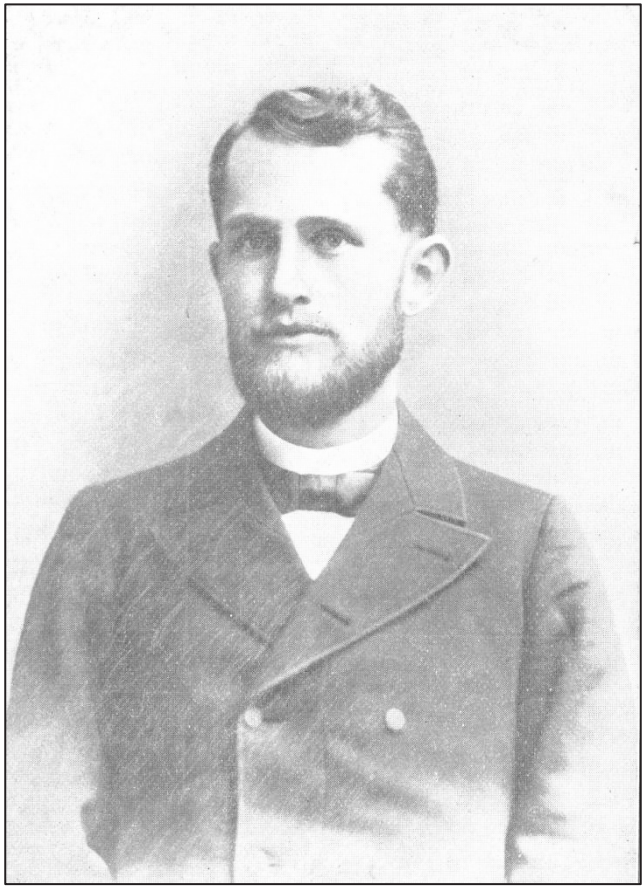


8. Senator Peter Jansen (left) and Professor C.H. Wedel (right)

4. The **membership** of the Krimmer M.B. Church is well over 1,000, with forty-two elders, ministers, missionaries, and deacons (eight actual "elders"). The elderly brother, Br. Jakob A. Wiebe, founder of this church (often called "Wiebe's church," especially in earlier days), is still among the living.

We list one **address** for each minister or elder of the mentioned **states** (province):

Jakob A. Wiebe, Lehigh, KS
Jakob Fast, Jansen, NE
Jakob J. Hofer, Freeman, SD
Jakob Klaassen, Hooker, OK
M.B. Fast, Scottdale, PA
Jakob M. Tschetter, Elkpark, NC
Peter Fast, Escondido, CA
Heinrich A. Goossen, Waldheim, SK, Canada
Members also live in Texas.



9. Missionary Peter H. Wedel

B.
The so-called "Kirchliche" Mennonite Churches in the United States of America and Canada, those who emigrated from Russia

IV. Settlement and Dispersion in America

§30 In discussing the **motives for the emigration and its realization**, we will use mainly American sources.[81] (We have already explained our position in the section "Non-Resistance and Emigration." Part I, §260ff).

1. Br. M.B. Fast, editor of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, presents the matter as follows (we abridge freely):

a) *"In the year 1870, the* ***privilege*** *granted the Mennonites in Russia was* ***revoked***[82] *and its validity officially withdrawn. Czar Alexander II sent Totleben to persuade the Mennonites to accept forestry service, but he was only partially successful. Thousands of fathers*[83] *preferred to leave Russia, their dear fatherland, and immigrate to America, where everyone can live according to his faith. For this purpose, various churches in the Molotschna held a number of consultations. The Czar finally agreed and decided that whoever wanted to leave Russia could do so until the year 1880. Since then, only travel passports, but no more emigration passports, are available in Russia.*

"Our forefathers were forced to leave Holland, because the government wouldn't allow them to practice their faith. The government, assuring the Mennonites in Prussia exemption from military service, quickly withdrew that privilege. In Russia, our fathers enjoyed many good things. As a result, a lot of Mennonites became very rich. Most of the others, who were day laborers in their country of origin, remain in that position with their children until today.

"Of the Mennonites who immigrated possibly only a few individuals who later regretted having left, returned to Russia. May our young men never forget why their parents, trusting God, went on this long journey. They wanted to avoid seeing their children bear firearms[84] *or serve as jurors.*

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[81] For which we declare our reasonable accountability to the worthy authors. — It must be said that, with respect to the economic and civil aspects, the settlements of the "Mennonite Brethren" did not differ in anything from those of the "kirchliche." The two groups are one flesh and bone; they differ slightly in spiritual method.

[82] Not yet at the time.

[83] Only about one-quarter (or one-third)?

[84] Something the Mennonites in Russia are not forced to do!

§31 b) *"Twelve **deputies** were sent **to America** in the summer of 1873 to look for a place where the Mennonites could live according to their principle of non-resistance. Various railroad companies here put a lot of effort into showing the deputies the open domains of the great west. These men returned with a good message, and some families set out for America in the fall of the same year. The Russian government banished Elder Isaak Peters, Pordenau, and Cornelius Jansen (German consul) from the country, and ordered them to cross the border in a few days, because they freely and publicly spoke in favor of emigration to America.*

"C. Jansen defended the non-resistance principle with serious zeal and boldly criticized the changes entailed by the new law, which drew the attention of the officials to him. After somewhat examining the advantages and disadvantages in America, he got in touch with the Burlington Railroad Company. He and his son Peter directed the settlement in Jefferson County, Nebraska. — (He died at the age of 72 years in 1894.)

"In the year 1874, many families wanted to emigrate from Russia. This caused the value of farms and machinery to drop drastically; although, at the time, the Russian ruble still had a value of 75–77 cents. — Later, in the year 1877, its value dropped to 44 cents!

"Many of the first emigrants took along farm wagons and many other things, which proved to be very foolish: the Russian wagons, spades, and forks were all but useless here. The chassis of the wagons were not properly aligned and spades, forks, etc., did not clean off [?].

*"The Bergthal and Old Colony groups, as well as part of the Kleine Gemeinde, settled in Manitoba, Canada. Many chose Minnesota, South Dakota, and Nebraska, the largest contingent settling in the Marion, Harvey, and Reno counties of **Kansas**. The government had donated vast tracts of land to the Burlington and Santa Fe railroad companies for building a railway through the 'wild west.' These companies now competed for the privilege of selling as much of this land as possible to Mennonites by offering them very advantageous conditions.*

"The Santa Fe Railroad even sent Mr. C.B. Schmidt to southern Russia to persuade many to emigrate, but, after working with good results for a while, he had to make a hasty exit.

"The emigration was connected with many troubling problems. The intimate bonds of many families were broken and many a relationship, where marriage was not yet possible, had a sad outcome. The journey was also rife with unforeseen experiences. Yet, in spite of all the disagreeable circumstances, the hand of the Lord was evident. None of the many emigrants died due to an accident on the long trip, and only a few received injuries due to carelessness.

"Although some of the settlers were rich and a small number were well off, by far the greatest number belonged to the poorer class. A number of families were entirely poor and had to be supported for the trip. As a result, the dwellings on the

western prairies differed greatly. They could purchase land from the railroad companies for ***$3.50*** *to* ***$5.50*** *an acre at 6% interest for a ten-year term. In the initial years, many a family had to get along on rather meager means, but it is unlikely that anyone really suffered hardship — at least not generally, the way our fellow believers in Russia have experienced it for years.*

"A great drawback on the new settlements was the fact that the settlers clung to the customs they had brought along and wanted to farm here exactly as they had in Russia. 'Ohm' Gaeddert even had threshing stones of the kind used in Russia made for 'rolling out' the grain. But they put them away as useless the very first summer. Now and then, one can still see them as old landmarks in Reno County. Furthermore, they only grew wheat, and that on the same field year after year. Finally, they began planting corn, rotating crops, and raising more cattle; and thus the farmers rose above their difficulties.

§32 c) *"Driving through the Mennonite settlements in Nebraska and Kansas* ***today*** *and mentally going back in time twenty-five to thirty-five years, one can hardly get one's bearings. Today they have constructed large one, one-and-one-half, and two-story buildings with modern facilities. Big barns with mechanical devices and elevating granaries can be seen on many farms in Nebraska. Recently, they sold a 200-acre farm in York County for $110 per acre. (People today, in 1910, even dare to ask for $125 to $150 per acre.)*

"Where formerly it was a 10 to 15–mile drive to town, they have now constructed railways through the center of settlements and, after completion of the railway station, cities and towns have sprung up, causing the settlements to develop remarkably fast.

"Earlier, with urgent need of a doctor, they had to drive ten to fifteen miles, and the doctor had to drive the same distance on unpaved roads, so it often took three to five hours for medical help to reach the patient. Today everything has changed. Calling the doctor from the farm or asking a merchant about today's price of wheat or cattle by telephone is a matter of two minutes. If the merchant happens to be short of some pigs to fill a car, he can talk it over in five minutes with the farmer, who can deliver what is missing.

§33 d) *"At first they held* ***meetings*** *in homes, barns, or sheds. Later, they built schools where they held meetings, if possible. Today, in almost all regions in the west where Mennonites live, one also sees beautiful church buildings, some of them almost covered by beautiful shady trees.*

e) *"I do not want to write much about the* ***spiritual life****. A bishop from the west writes: 'Among our fathers, at the time, more in the way of a simple trust in God was evident, without a clear concept of what it means to be born again. What is*

lacking today is the matter of taking the Christian life seriously, and there is an increasing preoccupation with education. The conversions can be designated as American rather than biblical. [!] *In many cases, no separation from the world is noticeable. Are we in a better situation than before? I believe so. Today, people know that they must have a change of heart in order to get to heaven. Formerly, people believed that one could not know whether one had forgiveness of sins. Our people have hardly become more honest. The sense of reverence and awe has disappeared for the most part, especially among the youth.'*

"Another bishop writes: 'Externally, the spiritual life in our Mennonite community is in a much better state than at that time, although infused with a pretense of piety. But, with reference to true inner life, our time resembles the days of Noah.'

"The third bishop writes: 'In general, the immigrants experienced spiritual desire. I will not deny, however, that there was a general over-emphasis on the cause of emigration, which included a certain outgoing attitude and possibly conversion. There was too much emphasis on the earning of rewards. Nor will I deny that not much spiritual life was aroused or achieved. God loves it when we search for Him and find Him. But, in spite of all the progress in spiritual matters, what is evident is too much polished Christianity and too little true spiritual life. Materialism has also penetrated the Mennonite community. Humanly speaking, things appear to have improved. Everything is on the move, almost everything appears to be converted, but I doubt somewhat whether the soil of the heart is good and virgin enough to allow God's seed to fall in and really bear fruit for eternity.'

"I believe that if one started out on a trip today in northern Saskatchewan and visited all the Mennonites in Manitoba, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, California, Oregon, and Washington and attended every meeting of the Mennonites in every state (and province), one would certainly have to assume that things have improved."

§34 2. In *Geschichte der Mennoniten* (Philadelphia, 1890), Br. D.K. Cassel recounts an interesting description of the first Mennonite settlement in Kansas, written by a journalist (non-Mennonite).

Russian Mennonites in Kansas. — A day among the Mennonites (from Noble Prentis's "Southwestern Letter," written in the year 1882).

"By far the most extensive and most noteworthy immigration [in Kansas] *was that of the so-called "Russians," which began continuously in the year 1874 and resulted in the settlement of* ***15,000*** [?!] *Mennonites*[85] *in the counties of Marion, Harvey, McPherson, Butler, Reno, and Barton.*

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[85] Prof. C.H. Wedel writes that 15,000 Mennonites emigrated from Russia to all of North America; possibly more correct.

"Topeka was the meeting place of the Russian immigrants in 1874 and 1875. For many months, the city was flooded with men in wide sheepskin trousers, onion-like women's skirts, with iron pots and other objects considered to be exclusively Russian. The two 'land grant' railroad companies, the Kansas-Pacific and the Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fe, engaged in fierce competition to secure them as settlers. With its usual good luck, the Santa Fe Railroad Company got hold of the biggest and best class, the Mennonites . . .

"The Mennonites appear to feel more at home in this country and, having acquired good land from the Santa Fe Company, they soon left Topeka. In the summer of 1875, accompanied by Mr. C.B. Schmidt (at that time as well as at present in 1882, immigration agent of the A.T. & S.F. railroad companies and chief mover of the settlement in Kansas), I visited that part of the colony settled in the villages of Neu-Alexanderwohl, Hoffnungsthal, and Gnadenau in the counties of Harvey and Marion. What I observed during that trip I recorded for the 'Commonwealth' in an article entitled 'The Mennonites at Home.' From the time of that trip until yesterday I had not seen the Mennonites, although I was very curious to see for myself how they had progressed.

"In the year 1875, they were still a strange people. They stuck to the small, green, clattering wagons brought along from Russia and tried to live the same way they were accustomed to living in Russia. The village of Gnadenau was the most prominent of their settlements: a long row of houses mostly built of brushwood and covered with long reeds (prairie grass). Some of the richer citizens had built wooden houses equipped with Russian brick stoves for keeping the family warm and cooking the food using two armfuls of straw, sufficient for the whole day.

"The land, owned by the residents in individual sections, surrounds the settlement. Some of it was quite far removed, while a large, ordinary field or garden lay nearby, primarily reserved for planting watermelons, which appeared to be the most outstanding article on the Mennonite menu.

"The location of the villages appeared to be carefully chosen. Each lay on a slight elevation, which is common on the prairies. It was summer in Kansas and the scenery naturally extraordinarily beautiful. But neither the scattered nor the grouped Mennonite houses, with their bare walls of brushwood or boards and surrounded by broken prairie fields, contributed anything to beautify the scenery. The people, like their houses, were useful, but not handsome. They had not yet overcome the effects of the long sea voyage or life in the inhospitable immigration quarters of Topeka, where they had won the reputation of uncleanliness, which they certainly did not deserve. Still, their determination and perseverance was noticeable from the fact that all, men, women, and children, were at work, which promised well for the future. It did not take a lively imagination to predict that these rough dwellings would in time be displaced by durable brick houses, surrounded by fruit gardens like those owned by these people when they lived along the banks of the Molotschna River in far distant

Russia. Admittedly, it was assumed that they would remain village dwellers, that they would retain the customs brought from Russia and, for generations, remain a separate people, uncouth, separating themselves from the world and, consequently not desirable settlers.

"Barely seven years have passed, and on the last Friday the author realized a long-cherished wish to see the Mennonites once more. The plan was to drive from Newton in the morning . . .

"Wheat fields, in varying shades of lush green, swayed like waves breaking up the waters of the sea. Prairie chickens, aroused by the old hound, rose upward on rapid wings. Flocks of green plover (birds) peered from the grass, and the lark began several tones of its never-ending song.

"A great change had occurred here since my last visit. The once wild prairie now sported houses resembling those in Illinois. Finally, after a drive of ten miles, Mr. Muntefering announced sight of the first Mennonite dwelling, apparently situated on the edge of a young forest. Now I learned what I had not yet heard or else had forgotten: namely, that the Mennonites had thrown aside the village system and now each lived separately. For three years, they experimented with living in villages, but confusion arose in the paying of taxes. In addition, the desire for absolute personal and familial independence is everywhere, so they all moved onto their own land. However, they remained as close to one another as the region allowed. In some places, there are four houses on a quarter section, in others, four to a section. The large units such as Neu-Alexanderwohl, Hoffnungsthal, and Gnadenau still exist, but each group of farms has its own name, which at times has a poetic meaning, such as Gruenfeld, Blumenthal, Gnadenfeld, Emmathal, Hoffnungsthal, etc. The old dwellings (we believe the Mennonites have never become adapted to the earthen huts) were replaced with wooden houses, sometimes painted white with wooden shutters. The houses[86] had neither verandas nor other architectural ornamentation, and resembled each other in appearance. I heard later that the houses had been erected by contract and that a carpenter from Halstead had built 65 houses in this area.

"The most striking phenomenon in these places is the rapid growth of the trees. When I left earlier, the prairie was barren, but now I saw a large number of thickets wherever I looked. The fields of wheat and corn were not fenced off, but several acres around each house were planted with hedges, fruit trees, lane forming and single trees. In many cases, the houses were almost invisible from the street. In a few years, the cool shade will hide them completely. Where the houses were only several yards apart, which was often the case, a footpath led from one house to the other between two rows of poplars.

"The wild olive tree, a shrub with extremely fragrant leaves, imported from Russia, was found everywhere. Surpassing everything in growth, however, was anoth-

[86] Cf. above, M.B. Fast's last description of Mennonite dwellings, etc.

er import from Russia. This was the fruit-bearing mulberry tree, used as a hedge as well as for fuel and for feeding the silk worm. We wanted to see several specimens of Mennonites and their houses, so we began by driving up to the house of Jakob Schmidt, who showed us the silk worms he was feeding in his parlor. Thousands of worms resembling the maple worm covered a layer of mulberry branches spread on tables and framework. As soon as these worms consume the leaves on the branches, the farmer adds new branches. The worms need more room as they grow, finally consuming mulberry shrubs by the load. Mr. Schmidt said these worms would soon cover the attic floor. How odd that the final product of this blind, crawling, green worm, greedily gnawing on a leaf, would be a beautiful shimmering silk gown.

"After seeing the silk worms, we went to the house of Peter Schmidt. Had I been an artist, I would have depicted Peter Schmidt from Emmatal as a genuine, prosperous Mennonite. He was a big man, about forty years old. His face, round like the moon, was sun-tanned. He had a broad physique and wore a vest buttoned up to his neck. Peter Schmidt understood almost no English, but he conversed quite fluently with the help of Mr. Muntefering. He proudly showed us his mulberry hedges. The cuttings are planted in three rows and are trimmed in stages; Peter had already trimmed one row and so had a large pile of brush for fuel. At first, the Mennonites depended on straw and manure, the latter being dried, but now woody plants are on the increase on their land. They seldom or never indulged in the luxury of burning coal [at that time!]. *Another source of pride were the apricots. The seed had been brought along from Russia, and last year, the trees bore abundantly. The Mennonites, taking apricots along to Newton as a snack, were pleasantly surprised when they were offered $3 per bushel. Peter Schmidt showed us all his planted treasures: apples, berries, peaches, apricots, and pears, all bearing fruit, where seven years ago, the wind only swept across prairie grass. No wonder Peter Schmidt of Emmatal smiled. He began on the prairie with $800; now he has a farm valued at $4,000.*[87] *Of course, we also went into the house; the door of every Mennonite house is open. The owner showed us his silk worms and property in general. He showed us his Russian stove built into a dividing wall, with which he heats two or three rooms and which can be used for cooking purposes. This facility cannot be explained without a diagram. The stove functions perfectly; the smoke finally rises in a roomy chimney, which is also used as a smoking chamber. Peter Schmidt was a happy man and very satisfied with the lot he had chosen. When I succeeded in mingling enough German and English to enable me to ask him how pleased he was with America in comparison to Russia, he replied in his deep voice and with a light smile, "Better." After a hearty leave-taking, we continued on our trip, leaving behind many houses, hedges, and gardens, finally reaching the dwelling of Heinrich Richert in Blumenfeld.*

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[87] For now, cf. above M.B. Fast's statements.

"This place was more modern in style. The house was a simple wooden structure American in style, but the barn had a roof of reeds on which pigeons cooed in the sun, as seen on pictures. Nearby, on either side, stood two other houses to which led shady avenues. In one of them, lived the oldest married daughter of the family. Near the front door, the path was lined with mulberry hedges, which were cut very short and trimmed on top the way box hedges are clipped. Also in place was a large flower bed, complicated in style, owned by Mrs. Richert. In the guest room, which had no carpet, but a floor of whitely polished spruce, was a bookcase set into the wall and filled with books, seldom seen [?] *in Mennonite homes. They were all well-kept books, Scripture commentaries and works concerning the care of horses. Mrs. Richert told us the story of the older books, which had been brought along from Prussia, where her husband was born; she herself, as well as their thirteen children, was born in Russia.*

"We decided to accept the hospitality of these good folk, and the mother and daughter served us an evening meal. — What a meal it was! Such bread, such butter and such preserves; almost everything on the menu was the product of their six-year-old farm. At the table, the conversation turned to the manner of life in Russia. According to Mr. Richert's description, the life the Mennonites lived there was much better than that of most of Russia's working population. They had Brazilian coffee, which arrived via Hamburg, and tea coming overland from China. Then they had fish, freshwater fish from the Sea of Asov. He said the arrangement of the meals had already changed somewhat since the Mennonites immigrated to this country.

"After the evening meal, Richert, his son, and the visitors had a long discussion about Russia. Up to the year 1871, the Russian government treated the Mennonites as well as one could wish. The agreements made during the reign of Empress Katharina, called 'Privilegium' by Mr. Richert, were faithfully kept. The Mennonites did not own the land; they leased[88] *it on condition of cultivating it. The improvements they made belonged to them. The Mennonites actually had very little to do with the imperial government; each of the fifty* [56] *villages* [of the Molotschna] *had its own mayor, elected by the residents of the village. The government conducted its business with the Mennonites through a public welfare committee composed of three officials, who faithfully fulfilled their duty, rarely seen in Russia. The Mennonites were diligent, peace-loving, and loyal; the richest man in the Crimea, indeed one of the richest men in Russia* [?!]*, was a Mennonite. Everything went well until, in the year 1871, the government declared its intention to introduce general compulsory military service, which the Mennonites protested against. They were given ten years to leave the country or else accept the innovation. Thousands moved away. In the year 1881, the government overturned the 'Privilegium,' gave the*

[88] The sentence, as translated from the English, does not render the original text nor the matter quite correctly. In general, translation has been detrimental to the article; the American German is generally neither clear nor beautiful.

Mennonites full ownership rights to their land and began introducing the Russian language into the Mennonite schools. Russia's loss is our gain.

"Mr. Richert's story was that of all the Mennonites to whom we talked. He had come to this country with $1,000; at the end of the second year, he had a debt of $1,300, but he had paid the travel debt and was now the owner of a debt-free farm. The Mennonites, it is safe to say, purchased their land from the railroad company section by section, and the intervening sections they mostly purchased from private persons. They have been prompt to pay. Many of the Mennonites were very poor; to supply them with land, a large sum had to be borrowed from wealthy Mennonites in the east. The borrowers are now well-to-do and the money was faithfully paid back, as far as I know. In addition to that, a mission institution has been established in the Indian territory in association with a number of American Mennonite churches, and a large sum sent to needy brethren in Russia. [At that time already?!]

"Continuing our trip, our next stop was the place of a settler who had a beard, wore a Cossack cap, and had more of the appearance of a Russian than anyone we had met so far. He took us into the room to show us some Tartar lambskin fur coats. This room was the exact replica of what is customary in Russia: the floor lightly spread with sand, wooden fixtures painted green and red, the chest fitted with a large padlock and large brass knobs on the lid — everything brightly polished. A small cabinet held a shiny collection of brassware and silverware [?]*; our stay resembled a visit to the Molotschna.*

"In the modest dwelling of Johann Kruse, we witnessed the process of winding silk thread on reels. Mrs. Kruse did the work using rough self-made reels. The cocoons had been poured into a trough of boiling water, and Mrs. Kruse very skillfully picked up the cocoon threads, caused them to merge into heavier threads, and wound them on the spool. The work requires untiring patience, which few Americans have. The Mennonites worked the silk industry in Russia with the greatest of success [for a while]*, and it looks as though they will make it a matter of great interest here as well* [which did not last].

"After leaving Johann Kruse, we stopped a number of times, but drove long distances always within sight of Mennonite houses, most promising orchards and vast fields of the greenest of wheat. Nowhere have I seen such a picture of farmer prosperity.

"To anyone not yet convinced that Kansas is suitable for grain farming, I recommend a visit to the Mennonite settlement. This is not difficult to do; easily reached are the points I visited in the counties of Harvey, McPherson, and Marion, driving a few miles from Newton or Halstead, which lie along the main line of the Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fe railroad, or driving from Canton, Hillsboro, and other stations situated along the Marion and McPherson branch line.

"I regret having to say that it is uncertain whether the work begun by these Mennonite settlers will be completed. Will the sons of Peter Schmidt in Emmatal or

Heinrich Richert in Blumenfeld walk in the ways of these worthy men? If so, the results will be simply fairy-story-like, but the fairy-like residents will be real men, each one weighing some 185 pounds. The gardens will grow and blossom, with a solid brick house at the center, like those in Russia, the richest farmers in Kansas living in them. There is a danger, however, that this will not happen. Jakob and David will go and work on the railroad, leaving the plow to its own devices; Susanna and Aganetha will go to the city to find a job, wear beautiful clothes, and marry American heathen; and the evil day may arrive on which the descendants of the 'old school' Mennonites will loaf around on 'store boxes' and try to rescue the nation on speaking tours or even prowl around like roaring lions and seek nomination to Congress. I wish I could believe differently. I wish the atmosphere we're living in did not make us so clever as to prevent us from enjoying good health. But for the accursed vanity and dastardliness, which we have inherited, I would in future see a peace-loving, quiet, well-to-do people, undisturbed by the whirl of speculation or politics, a people living most peacefully under its grapevine or mulberry tree, having been implanted into the grassy, wind-swept wilderness by its ancestors." [The fears of the author have been realized only to a minor degree, but the hopes have been realized to a major degree.]

§35 3. From the same book by D.K. Cassel, we quote the following intensely interesting **personal disclosure of the "Neu-Alexanderwohl Church":**

"May the following serve as answer to your request of September 22 of this year for a brief sketch of the history of our church, regarding its origin, names of its ministers, and number of members.

"Our thoughts on beginning a Mennonite history are as follows. If this is to be an explanation of our church as the right one (ranking it as equal to other churches, or possibly even better than other churches) derived from the apostolic era,[89] *we agree with the apostle Paul (Col. 3:10–11 and Gal. 3:28) that, in the above relationship to the apostles and Christ Himself, there is actually no difference among true believers over the whole wide world. 'If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal. 3:29).* [What a fine critique of a narrow-minded historical tendency, and what a noble, broad, and humble concept of Christianity!]

"Nevertheless, we do approve of the motive for publishing our history, principles, and articles of faith as indicated in the prospectus. However, the motive of the undertaking in question must be the desire to spread the truth as perceived by us and incite obedience to the exhortation in I Peter 3:15: 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

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[89] The tendency of all "Old Mennonite"-American writers of church history.

"Oh, it certainly leads to the praise of God and our Savior Jesus Christ that He has allowed no one to pluck our church out of His hand, and that He has Himself constantly supported it as His flock. In spite of manifold errors and weaknesses, which have clung to our church for so long, He has still not moved the lampstand of the gospel from its place. He has preserved it in difficult times of persecution and kept it from complete secularization in good days and pleasant external circumstances. However, when giving praise and honor to God, what we cannot fail to do is admit and confess our sins and errors, which will be quite self-evident in the explanation of our history.

"Among the various sins of our church, (just to mention one especially to weep over), is that of disunity, causing splitting and separation. In spite of all the tokens of the Lord's grace, we as the saints are so far still not 'thoroughly prepared for works of service, by which the body of Christ may be built up . . .' (Eph. 4:12–13).

"So the brief report we are prepared to give about our church is to contribute to the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has the authority to forgive sins on earth and who alone can bring it about that we 'might be for the praise of His glory' (Eph. 1:12).

"Our church here is called 'Neu-Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church.' It is located in Marion County, KS. The members reside mostly in the counties of Marion and McPherson of the above-mentioned state. Evident from our church register (and we must remember this was one hundred years ago under very different circumstances) is the fact that at the time of Elder Jakob Wedel,[90] who began the mentioned church register, our church was called 'Sogenannte Flamminger[91] oder Groningersche Mennonisten Sociëtaet in Preussen' ('So-called Flemish or Groning Mennonite Society in Prussia').

"It is no longer possible to ascertain when this church originated, but one of its earliest members is stated as having been born in 1640 and passed away in 1697.

"Evident from further statements is the fact that some members of this church came from other countries and other fellowships, e.g., from Holland, Moravia, and one member presumably from Sweden. An especially large number came from the Lutheran fellowship. One member apparently came from the fellowship of Bohemian and Moravian Brethren.[92]

"It is no longer possible to name all the ministers of this church, but we know a number of its elders: Elder Bernt Ratzlaff, Elder Benjamin Wedel († 1759), Elder Benjamin Wedel († 1785), Elder Jakob Wedel († 1791), Elder Benjamin Wedel († 1813), Elder Peter Wedel,[93] confirmed as elder in 1819, and Elder Peter

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90 Cf. Part I, §46.

91 Old Flemish! See Part I, §16, b.

92 Cf. Part I, §13.

93 Cf. Part I, §58, f, etc.

Wedel († 1871).[94] *In 1820, the church moved from Prussia to South Russia, Taurida Territory (with the last-named Elder Peter Wedel), and settled in the village Alexanderwohl in the Molotschna, where it also had its church. The members of the church were able to stay in Russia for fifty-four years in peace and quiet, living out their faith during the long tenure of our dear Elder Peter Wedel and that of our present Elder Jakob Buller, until they moved over to Kansas, North America, under the leadership of their present Elder Jakob Buller in1874.*

"We emigrated because the Russian government, by passing new laws, revoked the perpetual 'Privilegium,' which assured us exemption from military service granted at the time under Emperor Paul's government. Also, after considering the new laws, we decided to take advantage of the permission to emigrate rather than accept those laws and have the government force us to be unfaithful to our precious confession of faith. However, emigration cost us many a sacrifice and brought much privation. It is true, several had to pass difficult external tests, but we gladly confess: heretofore the Lord has helped us; the name of the Lord be praised!

"At present, our church has about 650 members. Although the church is near the middle of the settlement, the nine ministers and the beloved elder can hardly meet its needs because of the many members and the distance between them. Also, they must use their time to make a living, and so can never adequately fulfill that part of their official duties that consists of pastoral care.

"The church has eight to nine day schools (in which the students are instructed in German and religion) and the same number of Sunday schools.

"The names of the present ministers are:

Elder:	*Jakob Buller*
Ministers:	*Peter Voth,*
	Peter Unrau or Unruh,
	Heinrich Richert,
	Heinrich Goerz,
	Jakob Richert,
	Heinrich Banmann,
	Peter Pankratz,
	Peter Balzer,
	Cornelius H. Wedel

Elder Jakob Buller

§36 4. At our request, a Mennonite farmer from **Ringwood**, OK, who went to America from the Molotschna as a young man in 1874 and, as autodidact, displays significant development and deep thinking, sent us a report concerning the immigration and present state of the Russian

[94] So our statement in Part I, page 168 [English translation], on Elder Peter Wedel, is an error!

Mennonites in America. His letter can be considered as a **self-assessment from the midst of Mennonite farmers**. — We recount freely:

Rather remarkable is the fact that we Mennonites moved westward to America on almost the same road on which our ancestors once moved from Holland to Poland (which later became Prussia) and then to South Russia. Our road led past old Holland, from Russia to North America. — We came to North America, initially to Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota, Minnesota, and Manitoba (Canada). Perhaps we had a better trip than what our parents experienced on the way to southern Russia, yet our beginning here was fraught with many a troubling situation. The truth still stands: "Other countries, other customs," and our customs and conditions did not always fit these states. We had to make many a change, but our upbringing has stood us in good stead. We had to learn many good and useful things from our environment and experience much that taught us to proceed carefully. An unfortunate custom accepted in America is illustrated by the saying: "The one who is green may be scraped" and other similar sayings. — The money we had brought from Russia soon ran out and the market price of farm products was low. Therefore, our financial situation was not always the best. With time, this improved. Eventually our Russian Mennonite colonies grew and settled in over six states and two provinces: Oklahoma, Texas, California, Oregon, Washington State, Idaho, Saskatchewan, and Alberta in Canada. Recently we find ourselves at the border of our neighboring Republic of Mexico to the south. Some of our pioneers have already been there. I think the movement will be in that direction, and that, hopefully, in keeping with our old custom: trusting in God and without war flag and cannons. I have frequently called out to our local zealots, who were so upset during the Japanese-Russian war [the writer of the report is an ardent friend of Russia against whom the Japanese fought]. *I have told them that the Japanese would do better by taking us Dutchmen* [Mennonites] *as examples: we moved from Holland to Prussia, Russia, and the United States, but always recognized the flag under which we lived! Why did the Japanese want to unfurl their flag on the Asian mainland? Had we not conquered, indeed civilized, the* [above listed] *states without a flag, cannons, and war, and made them into what they are now? When, in* ***1874****, we came to Kansas, the English neighbors joked about our intention to grow wheat in Kansas; now Kansas is one of the most important wheat-producing regions under the sun. Really, dear brother and cousin, the Russian Mennonites have brought about change here! Our Russian Mennonites are achieving much good for America and that without being allowed to boast. Our Mennonite people have already taken up almost all the* ***industries****. — Perhaps we are guilty of one error: like all Germanic nations, we suffer a little* [only "a little"?] *from too much "land hunger," thus creating too great a rise in prices with respect to land! Land is too expensive among the Mennonites, which will be disadvantageous to their social life. If, for example,*

Mr. Br. and Sis.[95] *already quarrel over sole and overall ownership, how shall Lazarus acquire anything from the "footstool of God"* [of the earth, according to a word from the psalms] *to get a job and eat his own bread? And what if he hasn't the ability to do so? "Well, then he'll have to die of hunger!" — "Perhaps the Mennonites can be expected to* ***improve*** *in this respect once they* ***reflect*** *on it!"*

Following are comments regarding matters of church, school, and works of charity, which we utilize farther on; then the writer continues, elaborating on the "Mennonite idea" with his subjective-original approach.

I wish all Mennonites in America and Russia God's comforting grace and favor. Had we not obscured the law of the Spirit since apostolic times, the church of Christ would have continued advancing on earth in a healthy state. But, since the spiritual law became clouded in the hearts of humans by the fog and smoke of hell, the church of Christ has at times gone backward instead of forward. That was frequently the case "in America, the land of the literal interpretation of Scripture," just as it was in the old traditional countries. — "The Germanic peoples everywhere are at times excessively proud, war thirsty, and addicted to fame." The Mennonites, as a "peace-loving people," should try to find a remedy for this wound. — "The greatest victory is self-mastery." — Explaining self-control to the Germanic nations is very often a necessity and "keeping them away from a glass of wine as well as the thirst for war." — So, my brethren, let us avoid all the lascivious ways of the broad Babylonian road, refuse to join the army camp of those thirsty for war (Ezek. chapters 38–39) and entrust ourselves to God's ways, hastening along on the narrow way to completion of God's plan with humanity. It is the will of God, the God of heaven and earth, that all impetuous warfare and the bloody garment be burnt; in fact, that man shall not even learn to wage war. Isaiah combines this with Jesus' appearance on earth: We should read the entire book of the prophet Isaiah. According to Psalm 2, God has appointed His king to "inherit the nations." — So, we Mennonites also, together with many nations, may be His inheritance. — A glorious and precious truth.

Oh earth, small dawning star,
Like none of those distant worlds:
Despicably lost, blessedly chosen,
Born on you, the brightness of the Lord. (Gerok)

"That indeed is what takes us forward, otherwise we in America and those in Europe would fade away in the deserts of this life. May something for the salvation

[95] The names represent allegorical persons only (?).

of all nations and generations (Genesis 12), in particular for the tiny Mennonite nation, grow from the manger of Bethlehem's stable, from the Star of Peace! — is my wish and prayer. May God's will be done 'on earth' as it is in heaven. The King of Peace Himself taught us to pray, in that way. — J.F."

§37 5. We read more about how our Russian Mennonites fared in America in the ***Mennonitische Rundschau*** (1901, № 43), written by its long-standing editor, G.G. Wiens (graduate of the Halbstadt Pedagogical Secondary School, southern Russia). We use the text, abridging freely. — The extraordinary wheat harvests of recent years have worked miracles. Prominent business people claim: "There are no poor Mennonites anymore!" — The west, the great prairies of the United States, where the greatest number of Russian Mennonites live, has surpassed every other region of the Union with respect to agriculture. — The young, energetic [Mennonite] Oklahoma farmer takes his family to church in a new jalopy, passing the puny, small car of the English-American average farmer. The newly opened up land in Oklahoma is also headed for a brilliant future. A friend of the editor had acquired a quarter section of land in Oklahoma — as his own for $50 (180 acres = one complete farm of a Mennonite in Russia). This included the cost of traveling to Kansas and back. At the time the editor wrote the article, the farmer possibly already had $2,000 and wanted to wait to get $4,000 (cf. above, J.F. on "land hunger").

A German evangelical minister, who traveled through the Mennonite settlements in western America (in the United States), is even more delighted with the Mennonites in those parts: — The Mennonites, largely from southern Russia, have settled in western America and transformed the wide deserts into "pleasure gardens." They are farmers with very few exceptions, but live on their property like "small princes." — The reader need only recall the vast grain fields, where scarcely three houses are visible as far as the eye can see (according to *Mennonitische Blaetter*).

§38 6. Concerning the Russian Mennonites in the United States, we quote a talk by the well-known ex-President **Theodore Roosevelt** (*Mennonitische Rundschau*, 1903, № 19):

President Roosevelt meets Russian Mennonites[96]

"Deserving of a more precise mention is the meeting President Roosevelt recently had on his trip through western Kansas. That meeting took him to a settlement of

[96] To avoid misunderstanding, we always use the form, "Russian" Mennonites.

German Mennonites who had immigrated from Russia during the seventies and eighties and whose efficiency transformed the wilderness into blossoming gardens.

"Awaiting the president at Victoria station in County Ellis were a few hundred Mennonites who were in the process of becoming good American citizens, while remaining faithful to the good German customs and habits preserved in Russia. The women and children stood on one side of the track and the men on the other. When Roosevelt appeared on the platform of his car, the children sang the 'Red, White, and Blue' for him in clear voices. Then small girls presented him with beautiful, dainty bouquets of flowers planted by their parents, while the men and youths broke out in loud cheers. Roosevelt was very touched and visibly moved, expressing his feelings in the following hearty words, which showed that he was well informed about these settlers:

"I thank you all very heartily that you have come here to greet me. No meeting has given me greater joy than the one with you. I congratulate you as well as the United States; we are lucky to have citizens like you. I also congratulate you for what you have achieved here on the farms, in other occupations, and in all your activity. I congratulate you especially for your dear children, for the way you bring them up, as well as for their nice singing, and for what they're singing about. Truly agreeable for me is the sight of such highly deserving settlers and splendid citizens as well as their very promising offspring. I am happy and proud to have had the opportunity to see you" (Illinois state newspaper).

§39 7. **Peter Jansen, the Mennonite Senator**. — We have already mentioned the name Jansen, father and son, several times (cf. above, M.B. Fast). In the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 1910, № 39, in an excerpt from a letter of Jansen's to the editor, his old friend, we read:

"I was nominated against my will as Nebraska senator with a large majority." As we noted above, in the minutes of the Krimmer M.B. Church convention: a very large portion of the Mennonites in North America, likely the majority: the "Old Mennonites" of the "General Conference B," the "Amish" [see below], the "Krimmer M.B. Church," and many other Russian and Mennonite groups of longer standing in America, refrain in principle from participating in the affairs of the state. Peter Jansen also persistently refused the post of governor because that would make him military chief of the state concerned. The now deceased President McKinley was "not able to thank him" for his faithful service during the election campaign (Peter Jansen was a strong partisan "friend" of McKinley's) with anything except "his friendship." Jansen's selflessness moved the president to tears and he exclaimed: "Oh that I had many such friends!" — We already mentioned that

McKinley sent Peter Jansen to the Paris World Exhibition as commissioner of the United States.

§40 8. Even though they flourished and prospered in their new home, our transatlantic Mennonite family members **have not forgotten their brethren in Russia**. The Mennonite settlers encountering hard times in the Terek, the Orenburg and Samara regions, and Siberia (cf. above, Part I), benefitted from many good deeds. The Mennonites in the United States and Canada sent approximately forty thousand rubles through the sole mediation of Br. M.B. Fast, editor of the *Mennonitische Rundschau* (1910, № 40). An honor for the Americans — May God reward them! — and a sad reminiscence for us!

§41 9. Essentially everything stated above applies to the **Russian Mennonites in Canada**. We present only a few brief, special news items concerning them.

a) From *Taegliche Rundschau* ("Daily Review") according to *Mennonitische Blaetter* ("Mennonite Papers"), 1903, № 4 — *"During the last century, a number of Mennonites in Germany and Russia, who wanted to escape compulsory military service, immigrated to Canada and settled as farmers and cattle breeders in Manitoba and the western provinces. The Canadian government advanced* ***$96,400*** *to those without means for the purchase of cattle, machinery, etc. In answer to an inquiry in parliament, the Minister of the Interior stated that he had received payment of this sum plus interest (6% initially, then 4%) in the amount of $130,381.42. The entire house was surprised and astonished that there were still such honest souls nowadays who repaid credit received from the government, to say nothing of the interest . . . The Mennonites are undoubtedly Canada's best farmers. Their property is always in so flourishing a state that even lay people can distinguish them from other farmers . . ."*

"To add to the above," Mennonitische Blaetter adjoins, *"we wish to comment that that repayment was already completed a number of years ago* [before 1903]. *Moreover, only a very small number of the immigrants to Canada* [described here] *came from Prussia. The majority of the Mennonites recently settled in Canada since 1880 came from Russia, especially from Poland . . .* [The number of south-Russian Mennonites, who settled in Canada not only since 1880, but (most of them) already since 1874, far surpasses those who came from Poland.] *Our readers will remember from earlier issues of* Mennonitische Blaetter *that we already reported this fact* [treated in many issues of that paper] *at the time. It is ironic that when a group of people honestly repay similar loans to the government, the house of deputies expresses astonishment! I Peter 4:4."*

b) From the newspaper *Der Deutsche*, according to *Mennonitische Blaetter*, 1908, № 4:

"Today the ***Mennonite population*** *in southern Manitoba numbers about 25,000.*[97] *The Canadian government gave them large tracts of the most fertile land in Manitoba south of Winnipeg, which is still designated as 'east and west reserve' today, land on which the Mennonites have created the most beautiful and profitable farms by untiring diligence and perseverance. In the beginning, the Mennonites were often 'taken for a ride'*[98] *by dishonest persons. These chaps knew that, at the time, the Mennonites would never have gone to court and taken legal action, so it was easy to profit from them. In spite of that, the immigrants became prosperous. Since they habitually have very large families, there is no more room for the younger generation to farm in Manitoba, so young people have emigrated to the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, and partly to British Columbia, where they practice fruit growing. These young people are getting along well. They follow in the footsteps of the ancestors with only few exceptions. Even though their perspective has become less stringent (e.g., the young people are allowed to go hunting with a rifle), as a whole, they all hold faithfully to their traditions. — Worth mentioning in this respect is upkeep of the German language. The Mennonites speak and write a good German, in spite of having resided in Russia and Canada through a number of generations. By comparison, the children of just immigrated national Germans revert to English much too often and too quickly. Among the privileges expressly granted the Mennonites when they immigrated in the year 1875 was the taken-for-granted exemption from serving in the Canadian military . . . and the unconditional unrestricted practice of their principles of religion and education. Almost all of the children attend private schools. The Mennonites have little to do with the public schools, which are financially supported by the government of the province of Manitoba. It has been only a few years that parents who want their children to learn better English allow them to attend those public schools.*

"This year, the provincial government of Manitoba has issued an edict urging that the British Union Jack,[99] *symbol of the association with the English motherland, be flown atop all public schools during the time of instruction. Failing that, the school disobeying the order is stripped of provincial support. This edict, in itself rather childish, has aroused dissatisfaction even among many non-Mennonites. Whether the flag flutters atop the school house or not is of little consequence, but we have a Canadian flag which has a Union Jack in the upper left hand corner; so, if flagging is a must, it is the Canadian flag that belongs atop the schools. The 'military symbol' is especially painful for the Mennonites. Compared with the Liberal government*

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[97] Possibly understood thereby are Russian and Old American "Old Mennonites"; see below under "Old Mennonites."

[98] Cf. above J.F. from Ringwood: "scrape."

[99] The English national and war flag.

of the entire Dominion of Canada, our provincial government in Manitoba, very imperialistically minded and distinctively so, has no soft spot for the foreigners and supports the edict, as personally stated by Premier Roblin . . . The government does not want to make any exceptions favoring the Mennonites since elections are over. Before the elections,[100] *they were admittedly promised that their rights would remain untouched and they would not be forced to hoist the Union Jack on Mennonite schools. — The Mennonites will now leave the public schools and return to their own private schools, doing without the financial support of the ministry. — That is a truthful picture of our brethren overseas* [adds *Mennonitische Blaetter*]. *It's an open matter whether such doubts regarding hoisting of a flag atop a school would be raised among us anywhere in Europe, Russia included. With respect to non-participation in politics and quarrels of the world, the brethren in America take a different position."* [As far as we claim to know, the order regarding the Union Jack was later rescinded for the Mennonites.] — We already recounted above with what enthusiasm and emphasis the Russian Mennonites received the Russian Prince Galizyn and assured him of their thankful love for Russia.

[100] Therefore, a significant number of Mennonites are voting here as well; otherwise, one would not relate to them at all about the matter.

V. The Development of Church Life

§42 1. We will here try to present an **overview** of the **church life** of our brethren in America, which was partially touched upon in the above discourses. — Over there, for the most part, the same denominations exist which we know in Russia, only there are more of them and they are more clearly defined by their outward appearance. We became acquainted with the two Mennonite Brethren churches in the preceding chapters I–III. The older type of churches to be described here, which originated in Russia, mostly called "kirchlich" by us, are there divided into several conferences or groups.

§43 2. The following groups known to us were adamant with regard to any change in their old habitual ways adopted in West Prussia and southern Russia. They most strongly emphasized non-resistance and abstinence from all affairs of the state.

a) The Bergthal Church (cf. Part I, §73, b, etc., and "Emigration") in Manitoba, Canada (and Minnesota, USA?), led by Elder **Gerhard Wiebe**, formerly in Bergthal, but with roots in Chortitza. Their entire striving (more or less, likely until the present) consisted of firmly holding on to everything old in church life and keeping distant everything new. Using strict church discipline, they planted piety and "abstinence from the world" with the inflexible, ponderous, old method. In their view, worldliness consisted not only of the affairs of state and the modern school system, but also of modern buildings, refined household facilities, modern vehicles, clothes, and — the English language. The rules were enforced through strict church discipline and severe discipline of children in the family. The school (their own "German" private school and complete avoidance of the English state schools) was managed entirely in the imperfect manner of the old Bergthal or Russian Mennonite type prevalent before the reform.

b) The church of Elder **Johann Wiebe** of the "Grossfuerstenland settlement," origin Chortitza (in the Melitopol district, Taurida). If we are not mistaken, he was also the elder in Manitoba and Minnesota, and was possibly even "stricter." — An educated Mennonite minister of upright character told a story about a preacher in one of these churches who postponed conducting the funeral of one of his members until the sister of the deceased left (for moral reasons, this sister had been banished, because she had married a man from another "kirchliche," but less "strict," Mennonite church). — We are not certain whether this

church stood (or stands) at least in a relationship of recognition with the "Bergthalers," but we believe so. — There are noticeable signs that evangelical warmth and an appreciation of culture are beginning to find entrance into these two churches.

c) The "Kleine Gemeinde" (after being reduced to ruins in southern Russia, see Part I**,** §36[2]) has, under its former, re-instated Elder **Johann Friesen**, Neukirch, again re-organized into several groups in Dakota, USA, and Manitoba, Canada. It too is experiencing more life and leniency in the evangelical sense. — These three churches are not the only ones in North America which are known for the ultraconservative trend, according to the old West Prussian-Russian concept of the bias of former Elders Heinrich Wiens and Klaas Reimer (see Part I, §36 and §61).

§44 3. a) From the very beginning, Elder **Isaak Peters** of Pordenau, Molotschna, southern Russia, occupied a very special position. He has been introduced at various times in Part I of this book, most characteristically in Part I, §19 and §137(2). — In the Molotschna, he already had a particular position in the Pordenau church, where he spoke out in unsparing penitential sermons and advocated similar church discipline according to the strictest Mennonite concept, so that he and his like-minded partners withdrew or actually allowed themselves to be ousted shortly before emigrating in l874. — In America, he always stayed with a small group, the "small flock" and "true church," while associating with the "General Conference B" of the American Old Mennonites. This church or fellowship of his, now led by a number of elders (father Peters, more than 80 years old, has withdrawn from responsible leadership), is often called the "Isaak Peters Church." (This is the third "Peters Church" among the Russian Mennonites: the "Hermann Peters Church," Part I, §126, the "Abraham Peters Church," Part I, §258, and this "Isaak Peters Church"!) — Peters is a strict and iron-clad "old Mennonite," when it comes to doctrinal and life questions concerning society and the state. And yet he is a man who understands the value of books, especially relevant historic and theological literature, and is an authority in Mennonite history, whose equal we have not met. In Part I, §137(2), above, we saw both his position relative to the form of baptism and that relative to the doctrine of the "millennium." But this aged, ultraconservative brother and elder knows the meaning of new spiritual life obtained through repentance and faith (being born again), and recognizes the evangelical means requisite thereto: live preaching,

instruction of young people, Bible study, and collective prayer meetings (see Part I, §19). He one-sidedly and with partiality combats all that deviates from the strict, old, genuinely Mennonite, i.e., that deviates from the "Mennoist" dogma and ecclesiastical system. But he also combats the dead, rigid approach (falsely considered as being the Mennonite approach) of those who do not know, or even treat with hostility, the true life from God and the true evangelical means of salvation.

§45 b) He enlightens and exhorts the "dear old people," who, although pious, remain without renewal of the heart, fearing and rejecting everything that they see as "innovation" in the following manner (*Mennonitische Rundschau*, 1907, № 47 and № 48):

"Something from the good old times concerning Sunday schools and gatherings for edification. — The apostle teaches: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God' (Col. 3:16). This means more than just delivering a sermon Sunday morning, listening to it, and habitually continuing the empty way of life handed down from our forefathers, with all sorts of prejudices concerning renewal in applying and examining God's Word. Servants of the Word continue to complain that there still are those among the old people who are biased against Sunday schools. Although they accept them for the children, they do not participate themselves, in spite of the fact that Sunday schools have existed a long time and have proved to be a blessing to old and young. Even the old people will not want to be without them in the future at any cost.

"So, I made up my mind to publish something from the good old times, taken from the stories of our forefathers. Since the great Reformation, our ancestors maintained the Sunday school and special Bible studies in addition to preaching. Both were no innovation as the old people in their prejudice consider them to be. Instead, they are the resumption of meetings for edification, which were dropped with the passage of time. In this case, the prophetic word is also applicable to our fellowship: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it and you will find rest for your souls. But you said: We will not walk in it' (Jer. 6:16). That is what the old people in Israel did, and that is the position of the old Christians regarding resumption of the abandoned edification for old and young in the church.

"We read that, in the year ***1535****, one year before our reformer Menno Simons (after whom our fellowship is still named) joined the church of the quiet Anabaptists in the Netherlands, our ancestors explained their doctrine of faith to King Ferdinand (to whom they were accused of being harmful subjects). They explained it as it is contained in their catechisms, which they used for giving their youth and children conscientious instruction in religion by holding* ***children's classes*** *on Sunday*

afternoons. In that same century, Bible studies were already held in which the participants edified each other according to I Thess. 5:11 and Heb. 10:23–25. What does that entail? Just listening to a sermon? In those meetings for edification, each participant has the opportunity to raise questions for discussion, regarding obscure passages of Scripture according to II Peter 3:16. Those gatherings were called 'Colleges' . . . [see Part I, §19].

"We combine those two modes of edification in the Sunday school, allowing old and young to participate in them. We divide the Sunday school into classes, putting the old with the old, youth with youth, and children with children, a class for each age level. We assign a teacher, who has the Bible knowledge requisite for the class, to each level. In this way, we seek to lead our churches back to the evangelical and apostolic foundation, which they had left by the omission of mutual edification in God's Word.

"We acknowledged the New Testament teaching of Christ and His apostles as God's Word and rule for life when we joined the church by baptism and promised to be obedient. We are committing a great wrong when we are so prejudiced against it as to believe that we no longer need mutual edification. We old people need to be attentive to the apostolic teaching in II Cor. 13:5: 'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you— unless, of course, you fail the test?' Admittedly, when that kind of renewal in church affairs is undertaken, the old people should take the Bible in hand, do research, and find out whether the undertaking is based on the Word. If that is the case, they should approve and support it as much as possible, even though they are not accustomed to such activity during their life until now.

"From the beginning of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai, promotion of the cause of the kingdom of God has at all times undergone interruptions, as the Old Testament of the Bible clearly and distinctly teaches us. This was especially true at the time of Christ, when the Old Testament covenant people were so deeply in decline that they still obeyed the letter of the Law in some measure, but did not understand the sense. That is why they sentenced the Messiah to die on the cross. This is also what the church history of the New Testament reports. This is why we must always test ourselves by the teaching of Christ and His holy apostles. Are we, with our presumed faith, really standing on evangelical and apostolic ground or have we already deviated from it somewhat here and there? Christ teaches us: 'Study the Scriptures diligently, for you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life' (John 5:39–40). Paul teaches: 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come' (II Cor. 5:17). He writes to Titus: 'He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior' (Titus 3:5–6). Beloved old people, by

these Scriptures we must examine and test ourselves to see to what extent all this has been fulfilled in us. Where that has not taken place, however, how can one claim the promise of blessed eternal life? In Heb. 11:1 we read: 'Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see'; and this certainty is obtained only by the process of change, which the dear Savior calls 'the new birth' in John 3:3. He doubly emphasizes the fact with 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' This means that the person does not understand the kingdom of God, and so is prejudiced against the elements which promote this cause. What is lacking is that they are not born of water and the Spirit as stated in verse 5. According to Heb. 13:17, their souls are entrusted to the servants of the Word, who will one day give account for them. These servants are taught in Scripture to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins according to Luke 24:46–47 and Acts 10:42–43. To that end, the members need to receive and accept these teachings; not only believe them but be revived [experience and practice them] *as it stands written: 'The righteous will live by faith' (Rom. 1:17). Suggested further reading: Phil. 2:1–5, Eph. 4:1–6. That implies more on the part of the members than just listening to a sermon; it implies mutual edification according to I Thess. 5:11, Eph. 4:11–14, Heb. 10:24–25, Jude 20–21. All these passages teach us that true life in God and Christ Jesus requires something more than merely acknowledging what God's Word teaches, that with which so many so-called Christians content themselves. — It also teaches a complete change of heart and, where that has not yet happened, what is lacking is what Christ twice emphasizes with a double 'verily' in John 3:3, 5. So, lacking the personal experience, man is filled with many an unfounded prejudice concerning promotion of the cause of the kingdom of God. Exactly where God's Word exhorts him to promote it, he often impedes it by getting in the way. The true children of God shall 'all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to me,' says Christ in John 6:45, for 'God our Savior . . . wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' (I Tim. 2:4). And if one has known Holy Scriptures from infancy, they are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, for 'all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness' (II Tim. 3:16). But how can this work of the Spirit as taught in Scripture be fulfilled in us if it hasn't been taught us as children? Christ told His disciples, when He sent them into all the world with the gospel: 'Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you' (Matt. 28:18–20)."*

So we see that, with respect to the appropriation of salvation, the care of spiritual life, and the evangelical means of the same, father Peters stands on the same ground that the M.B. Church and its fellowship took and emphasized in its foundation documents. They appropriated all the positive elements which Pietism, Methodism, and the Baptists

have contributed (or "returned") to Protestantism in general and Mennonitism in particular. Others of Old Mennonite persuasion took this position before, during, and after it, as well. Peters and his fellowship have remained "old Mennonite" in tone and temperament (scarcely so in method — see "City Mission" farther on), on which we can only congratulate the aged teacher and brother. — Concerning Bishop Peters' one-sided opposition to baptism by immersion, the millennium, and similar topics, we have stated our final position in Part I, §137(2).

§46 c) As we know, Isaak Peters was one of the most energetic leaders of the emigration and somewhat a martyr in that cause. We quote part of his discourse on **Non-Resistance** and the **Reasons for Emigrating** (*Mennonitische Rundschau*, 1907, № 46), in which he certainly speaks in the sense of all the churches mentioned in this chapter: the "Amish" (see below), the M.B. Church, the Krimmer M.B. Church, and the "General Conference" (see below). Our position was announced in Part I, "Emigration." — Peters writes:

"This deviation from initial faithfulness (also called first love in Rev. 2:4) never happens suddenly, but, as every moral decline gradually results in the trespassing and non-observance of one command after another, so it is with the assuming of military service. Initially, there is only indirect participation in warfare without the sword, but that has later always led to direct participation with the sword . . . Evident from church history of the good old times is the fact that the early Christians interpreted prophecy to the effect that, with the incarnation of Christ, the time had already arrived in which, in His kingdom of peace, the swords were to be beaten into plowshares and the spears into pruning hooks, according to Isaiah 2:1–5 and Micah 4:1–7. Irenaeus wrote in a similar vein at approximately A.D. 180: 'This prophecy was already fulfilled in its time, for the contemporary true Christians had turned their spears and swords into instruments of peace and do not know how to fight'; whereas present Christendom expects fulfillment of this prophecy to occur in the future, at the end of this age. Justin Martyr, a contemporary of Irenaeus, writes: 'Those prophecies have already been fulfilled; and so you have good reason to believe that we, who formerly killed each other, now no longer fight our enemies.' (49) Tertullian wrote, among other things: 'You must confess that the prophecy has been fulfilled inasmuch as it concerns every person to whom it is applicable, for Christ, by disarming Peter, disarmed every soldier.' (50). During the first two centuries, one does not find a single Christian listed as a soldier. In the third century, when Christendom was in part already being integrated into the state structures, a number of Christians were already occupied as soldiers. Their numbers increased as general church-state integration increased until finally, in the fourth century, Christians became soldiers without hesitation and without conscience scruples (60). Emperor Con-

stantine moved into the Christian Church with his whole army and ever since that time Christians were not only recruited, but also whole armies were composed of nothing but so-called Christians, who conducted among themselves the bloodiest wars. This was contrary to the direct command of Christ: 'Love your enemies,' etc. (Matt. 5:43–48). It did occur now and then in those early times, that one or the other of the church fathers raised his voice as a witness to evangelical peace. However, once these fathers had passed away, the principle of non-resistance was dropped, together with the concept that the kingdom of Christ, here in these days of grace, should be considered a kingdom of peace (Isa. 9:1–7; Ps. 72:3,7; Rom. 10:15). Now the question arises whether the biblical scholars of the present last days, who approve of and justify war and military service, stand under the influence of the Holy Spirit to a greater extent than the early Christians of the first Christian church.

"The first emigrants, reflecting on all this and taking it into account, decided not to accept military service for their sons, even without the sword. This caused them, as it did their forefathers during the time of the martyrs, to take in hand the walking staff in search of an asylum where they could practice their faith unchallenged. They have never had reason to regret this step."

We here refer the reader to the conclusion of Peters' essay against the "millennium" quoted above (Part I, §137[2], c).

§47 With all his "Mennonite" brusqueness, Br. Peters does accept believers who think differently as brothers. — This year (1910) the group of "Isaak Peters Churches," in various parts of the United States and Canada, has organized and been incorporated (legalized) or applied to the authorities for incorporation as "Conference of the United Mennonite Brethren of North America." — With this name, this conference ignores, actually negates, the M.B. Church of North America, the Krimmer M.B. Church of North America, the United Mennonite Brethren, actually all American Mennonites, who all call themselves "Mennonite Brethren." — What does one make of this? Is the name not to be taken at face value? — This new conference publishes its own periodical (volume 1) entitled *Der Evangelisations-Bote*. — Aware of all the good we find in Elder Peters' work, this ambitious name shall not excite us too much: the "Father" can be trusted, through His "only Mediator," to "assemble all the children of God" in His time and His way, in spite of all our Mennonite and other churches and conferences.[101] Our hearts beat in love and esteem as well for this group of Jesus' disciples.

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[101] Could it be the idea of this conference to gather "all" the Mennonite Brethren in North America around a center in some sort of a relationship and form, thus creating a Mennonite *Allianz*? That is the intention of the "General Conference A."

§48 Also belonging to the **Christian undertakings** of this fellowship is the work of city missions, and that in the newest "Babylon" of the great transatlantic union, the young, giant city of Chicago, where it maintains a "Mennonite Rescue Mission" and a "Happy Hour Mission." (I wonder if it is in association with "General Conference B"? — Hardly: all the names of the donors and promoters are those of Russian Mennonites.) Working in the Rescue Mission are the A.F. Wienses and Sister Sarah O. Kroeker; in the Happy Hour Mission, the G.P. Schultzes. The nature of this work is exactly like that of the "city mission" described in Chapter II: evangelization in the hall and on the street, Sunday school, charity, distribution of New Testaments to penitent attendees at meetings, and home visitation. The sisters of the mission participate in the meetings by giving testimonies, etc. Converts among the number of non-Mennonite city dwellers are baptized and accepted into the church. Thus, the mission of the "Conference of United Mennonite Brethren of North America," like that of the M.B. Churches, has crossed the boundary of Mennonitism and turned to the "white heathen" of America. (A minimum of 25 million of the ca. 90 million citizens, i.e., residents of all classes in the United States, belong to no religious fellowship.) — "Lost sons" converted through this Mennonite mission return to their parents. A "penance altar" is in place for those in the meetings, who respond to the altar call and ask to be joined for prayer. With that, this fellowship has taken all the American-Methodist means as its own. — Everything that has a good effect shall be considered good. — Taste here, taste there! — The description of the work in Chapter II above also applies here: No more appropriate, more needed, more fruitful, and more evangelical mission can be imagined. — We present a few characteristic passages from the correspondence of these missions published in the *Evangelisations-Bote*.

Happy Hour Mission. Chicago, IL — *"The question is often asked: Where do the men stay who have made a fresh start? Are they all steadfast? To this our answer must be 'no.' Many go out to a saloon and drink again as before. Others are more serious about the change they have made. Following is a letter that I found at the mission recently. Someone had pushed it under the door: — 'My dear Sir! I was at your mission last Sunday. I did not go to the altar, but, assisted by the speaker, I gave my heart to the Lord in prayer at the close of the meeting that evening. (The speaker was Klaas H. Ewert from Minnesota, who studied at Moody Bible Institute.) I am now returning home to my mother. I ask you*[102] *and the other workers to pray for me that I might persevere in my Christian walk. May God be*

[102] Oddly enough, American Mennonites always translate the English "you" = Ihr, Sie, with "Du"! The Englishman addresses no one with "Du," except God.

with you in your work! My mother and I always pray for you in the mission. Your Arthur C. Benz.' — We have a number of such letters from young as well as old men, who had a conversion experience, left Chicago, and returned home. Praise the Lord! We now have a hall, which was used as a saloon possibly the last thirty to thirty-five years. Last winter, when violence in this saloon was so serious that two men and a woman were murdered in a span of six months, the police chief of Chicago deprived the saloon owner of his permit; and he had to vacate with all his goods. We went over and rented the hall for the mission. — Situated on either side of us, with only a wall between, is a saloon business where stuff that can ruin body and soul is being sold . . . We believe the Lord has assigned us this place and will not let the devil scare us away . . . Gerhard P. and M. Schultz."

Mennonite Rescue Mission — by Sarah O. Kroeker: *"One evening, as we returned to Happy Hour Mission after the street meeting, many listeners accompanied us. Among them was a woman, who did not look particularly desolate, but she had a wild appearance. She sat down and we began to sing, when it soon became apparent what kind of a spirit ruled her; she began to speak and curse loudly. When Br. Schultz didn't listen to her, she became angry and threw her book at his head, but it did not hit him. I sat down beside her and she calmed down, but once preaching began and the name of Jesus was mentioned, curses flew again with terrible gesticulations. She stretched out her hands toward me, which almost scared me. Br. Schultz joined us and we took her out . . . Later we met a woman on the street who was obviously drunk or drugged. She listened to us, but soon became overly involved with a drunken man. I went over and took her back to our side. She began to listen and finally said, 'Yes, the good Jesus is in your hearts, but He will not come into my heart . . . I am too bad. I am lost, eternally lost.' I told her that Jesus had come exactly for such people . . . We tried to bring her into the mission hall, but she would not come . . ."*

We see the brothers and sisters entering the cave of the lion. They take the bull directly by the horns. — We mention that there are other Mennonite missions of the same type in Chicago.

The brothers and sisters of the Isaak Peters group also participate in the foreign missions at Dhamtari and surrounding area in India, which is maintained by the "Old Mennonites" (see farther below). They are also interested in missions in China.

With respect to school affairs, we find nothing directly related to this group in the material available to us. But, since the "General Conference B" with which it is closely associated, maintains a higher education institution in Goshen, we conclude that the Conference of the United Mennonite Brethren of North America is not opposed to higher Christian education. In the mission in Chicago treated above, a brother preached who had attended Moody Bible Institute (see the letter quot-

ed above). Other brethren active in the Isaak Peters churches also study at Moody Bible Institute.

§49 Regarding publication: we already noted that this fellowship publishes the *Evangelisations-Bote*.

We are giving this very small conference, whose membership ranges from a mere three to four hundred, relatively much space. We believe that its main work is to win the "dear old people," whose souls cling to the "good old times" with every fiber of their being, but whose hearts reach out to new, true life from God. — To win them is to demonstrate that it is entirely "Mennonite" to revert to earlier "renewal" approaches and methods. Someone of Dutch-West Prussian-Russian heritage who hungers for God, but cannot identify with the M.B. and K.M.B. churches because of their radical break (especially at the start) with the then existing church, nor with the Mennonites of Russian origin in the "General Conference A" because of their identification with the fresh and joyous, though Bible-believing, church of Elder Isaak, will by no means accept anything that is new before having subjected it to a seven-sided examination; thereby to become convinced that it is truly a renewal, necessary to revive and nurture the new life from God. — Peters' manner (in spite of his personal brusqueness) was like the effect of steady, late summer rain on the water level of wells running dry. This is especially true when we compare it to the cloudburst-like downpour of the emergence of the M.B. Churches, or to Bernhard Harder's (the Mennonite Wuest's) type of preaching and its volcanic effect (although his soul was as loving and gentle as the dew of a summer night). The powerful effect of this "conference" is not restricted to the small number of formal members, but is demonstrated in fruitful stimulation of the most ponderous and most "old-fashioned" Mennonite churches of our West Prussian-Russian lineage. — Therefore, may God bless the "Conference of the United Mennonite Brethren of North America" — in spite of its usurper-sounding name!

Presented here are some of the addresses, brought to our knowledge, of leading brethren of this group. — That of the still living fathers and henceforth honorary bishops of the churches are: Isaak Peters, Jansen, NE; H.A. Wiens, Inman, KS; J.C. Wall (editor of the *Evangelisations-Bote*), Litchfield, NE; H.C. Unruh (assistant editor), Marion, SD; G.P. Schultz, 2318–35th St., Chicago, IL; A.F. Wiens, 2254–35th St., Chicago, IL; J.W. Fast, Jansen, NE; J.A. Wall, Mountain Lake, MN; Peter Schultz, Langham, SK, Canada.

4. The **"Western District Conference"** of the Russian Mennon- **§50**
ites.

a) Forming the center and focus of this conference (which, for its part, is a very important component of the "General Conference A") is the "Neu-Alexanderwohl" Church near Goessel and other places, Marion County, KS (see its "personal disclosure" above) with its staff of immigrant teachers: Elder Jakob Buller, Minister Peter Balzer, successor of the preceding person in the office of elder († 1908), Heinrich Richert († 1895; see his biography below), Dietrich Gaeddert († 1900; became elder of an independent church near Buhler, KS) and others. — Of great interest is the fact that these simple country folk, settling on new ground, were able to orient themselves so rapidly, not only economically, but intellectually (in education and in publication of periodicals) and spiritually, and take a stand. Once, having taken a stand, they were able to participate predominantly in the work of the spiritual-ecclesiastical and cultural advance movement of the "General Conference A" (to be given special treatment in the section dealing with the Old American Mennonites below) in which, it would appear to us, they are a leading group. For example, the deceased brethren, Elder Peter Balzer and Professor C.H. Wedel, were successively chairmen of the Foreign Mission Board of this conference. Their entire character, and therewith also that of the churches and denominations to be treated here, is portrayed in section "C" below. — The essential nature of these "ancients" is evident from the biography of Heinrich Richert; and the "youth" of this group, we believe can be characterized in C.H. Wedel.

Another church, recently beginning to sail in the fairway of the "General Conference A," is that of the deceased former elder from Berdjansk, Leonhard Sudermann. This church has become two separate sections: the Emmaus Church in Butler County, Kansas, and the Zion Church, Kansas. We believe Mennonites who emigrated from West Prussia were connected with this church, or else were predominant in it. Among the Russian Mennonites, who joined the "General Conference A," was the present elder in Newton, KS, Br. David Goerz (brother of Ohrloff Elder, Abraham Goerz). Since the early immigration, he co-labored with others or did the preliminary elder work, joining the church in Halstead, KS. This church essentially consisted of Old American or recently immigrated Swiss Mennonites. He was an outstanding student of teacher Hermann Janzen at the Ohrloff society school (Molotschna, southern Russia).

§51 b) The names of socially active men[103] are of historic interest and of characteristic significance. Following is a list of the ministers of Russian and (direct) West Prussian origin, belonging to the "General Conference A" in 1897. This was the twenty-third year of residence in North America of our first brethren to emigrate from Russia: H.R. Voth (missionary to Indians?), Keams Canon, AZ. — In **Kansas**: A. Ratzlaff, Alta; J. Schroeder, Annely; G. Harder (West Prussian?), Brainerd; D. Gaeddert, Buhler; J. Andres, Elbing; C.H. Regier, Elbing; H.W. Regier, Elbing; A.H. Harms, Elbing; G.R. Harms, Elbing; P.H. Schmidt, Elbing; J.J. Voth, Elbing; Heinrich Nickel, Elbing (we think, all the brethren with the "Elbing" address can be designated as West Prussians); P. Balzer, Fahrland; J. Harms, Farms; H. Banmann, Goessel; P. Balzer, Goessel; Benjamin Unruh, Hillsboro; J. Funk, Hillsboro; J.W. Penner, Hillsboro; W.J. Ewert, Hillsboro; J. Gerbrand, Hillsboro; J.D. Bartel, Hillsboro; H.H. Bartel, Hillsboro; J. Plaenert, Hillsboro; P. Goerz, Inman; Heinrich Goerz, Lehigh; Jacob Richert, Lehigh; Peter Pankratz, Lehigh; Peter Unrau, Lehigh; A. Woelke, Moundridge; Robert P. Wedel, Moundridge; J.R. Toews, Newton; B. Regier, Newton; H.C. Wedel, Newton; J. Buller, Newton; Peter Voth, Newton; D. Goerz, Newton; Johann Epp, Newton; P. Heidebrecht, Sparta; P. Ratzlaff, Sparta; P. Flaming, Sparta; G. Kliewer, Sparta; D. Unruh, Sparta; L. Sudermann, White Water; C. Claassen, White Water; Jakob Schmidt, Pawny Rock. — In **Manitoba,** Canada: H.H. Ewert, Gretna.— In **Minnesota**: H.H. Regier, Mountain Lake; Jakob J. Balzer, Mountain Lake; G. Neufeld, Mountain Lake; G. Fast, Mountain Lake; N.F. Toews, Mountain Lake. — In **Nebraska**: J.H. Zimmermann, Beatrice; G. Penner, Beatrice; P. Reimer, Beatrice; Johann Janzen, Beatrice; Johann Penner II, Beatrice; Johann Penner III, Beatrice; H. Wiebe, Beatrice; P.H. Pankratz, Henderson; D.D. Peters, Henderson; H.H. Epp, Henderson; P.J. Friesen, Henderson; — In **Oklahoma**: J.J. Kliewer, Shelly; P. Pankratz, Shelly. — In **South Dakota**: B.P. Schmidt, Loretta; C.J. Ewert, Loretta; H.P. Unruh, Loretta. — Of 138 known ministers of this conference, 73 have Russian (and West Prussian) names, subject to errors (according to D.K. Cassel). — A register of North American Mennonite ministers, "as far as known" (in the *Bundesbote-Kalender*, 1904), showed that of just under 1,300 names, a good 330 were of Russian-West Prussian descent, which is more than one-quarter.

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[103] Especially in a fellowship which is a "family church" to the degree that the Mennonite Church is.

§52 c) This conference was very soon zealously active in establishing schools. Around 1890, the Alexanderwohl Church, with ca. 700 members, had eight to nine day schools with instruction in German and Religion. — Already in the initial years, a continuing education school was founded with lively or even predominant participation by Minister David Goerz and our other Russians in Halstead, KS. — In 1893, Bethel College in Newton, KS, was established. Russian brethren of the "Western District Conference," also soon began publishing periodicals. Br. David Goerz published a small paper, *Zur Heimat*, in the initial years. — From the very beginning, these brethren have been zealous friends and promoters of the Sunday school, foreign missions, evangelization, and city missions (in the very manner described in connection with the M.B. Church and the Isaak Peters Church). For example, the "Neu-Alexanderwohl" Church with 576 members in the year 1887, i.e., only 13 years after the first settlement began, raised $5,060 for foreign missions. The workers of the "General Conference A" mission in India all have Russian (or West Prussian) names. — They have likewise taken diligent and loving care of the welfare concerns in the form of societies and institutions. We will deal in greater detail with all these branches of so-called home missions in the next chapter. We will give special treatment to foreign missions of this group in connection with "General Conference A."

§53 d) We would like to describe the intellectual character of the Russian Mennonite churches of the "General Conference A" as gentle, pietistic, culturally friendly, and community spirited. It is not uniform, but literally a Mennonite *Allianz*-minded denomination, based on a resolute biblical faith and the special Mennonite confession. Without leaving their own doctrinal position, these churches extend the hand of fellowship to every evangelical believing Christian. They appreciate and possibly support every salutary Christian undertaking and are ready to learn from it. — With reference to the state, these churches hold rigorously to non-resistance and object to oath-taking, but they do not muzzle their members or apply thumb screws to them, when it comes to participation in political life for the well-being of their own association and the public at large. This orientation already existed in Ohrloff and Gnadenfeld and partly in Alexanderwohl in Russia, long before the emigration (cf. Part I, §§38–52 and §§74–82). If it had had such spirited, energetic and yet circumspect representation and leadership in Russia 25 years before the emigration, the history of the "brotherhood" (Part I, §§38–52, §§74–82) would have taken a different course and been

written differently. Many sins and foolish acts would not have besmirched the pages of our history and, when writing and reading, not covered our face with such a fire of shame and moral anger, as is the case now. In Russia, the quiet Alexanderwohlers were almost only passive in their piety (not counting the first ten years, when Elder Peter Wedel was influential). They only began to come to the fore with Heinrich Richert, Dietrich Gaeddert, and others. They were in need of an example and the ready framework of the old American churches associated in the "General Conference" (see section "C" below). An important preparatory school for them was the story of the origin of the M.B. Church (whether they know and admit it, we do not know). In close collaboration with them was the former follower of Wuest, Elder Leonhard Sudermann, and a few others. In our view, the "military service question" was not the only reason for the emigration. Many had had enough of the stuffy atmosphere in the colonies and the soiled ground ("barley quarrel," "brother quarrel," "landless quarrel"), as evident in the fact that, due to the state of things, not a few families had moved onto estates in various regions: the Crimea, the Ekaterinoslaw territory, etc. The "military service question" supplied a password and banner to the impetus, something intelligible to all. (We suggest the reader compare what an elder has to say about the emigration in M.B. Fast's article above: it was understood as something meritorious, an "outgoing" and conversion of sorts.) Who would have thought that the very quiet "Old Flemish" of the Alexanderwohl church in America would exhibit such energy! Emigrations have a steeling, rejuvenating effect, as seen when comparing America with Europe, the Russian Mennonites with the West Prussians, the American Mennonites of our lineage with the Russian Mennonites. — That's the way it is; we are pleased with the existence and the work of the M.B. Church, the "Isaak Peters communion," the churches of the "General Conference," etc.

§54 e) **The diversity among the individual sections** of Russian Mennonites in North America is not as great as it appears to many of them, especially among the last-treated three to four groups. Conventions and committees deliberate on salvation and sanctification, city missions, foreign missions, Sunday school, young people's societies, Bible research, prayer meetings, pastoral care, and evangelization. Correspondents write about them in one spirit and in one and the same tone. The correspondents of the "Conference of United Mennonite Brethren of North America" and those of the "Western District Conference" report that the baptismal candidates "desire to testify publicly

when being baptized that they have become children of God," and "have found forgiveness of their sins in the blood of the Lamb." — The baptismal candidates of the M.B. churches express themselves in exactly the same way. The only difference is that the churches of the first-named two groups instruct their candidates about baptism formally before the act, while the M.B. churches impart the same instruction (perhaps not systematically enough) in Sunday schools and Bible classes before and after baptism. — They constantly learn from and compete with each other, mutually promote one another, and co-operate in charitable and educational institutions and societies, as well as economic enterprises. That is all commendable. However, there as well as here, their activity is interspersed too often with mutual jealousy, mistrust, even hostility and slander. They are delighted to discover and point out all sorts of errors, mistakes, and sins in the other people's camp! "Rom. 16:20!"

§55 f) Churches belonging to the "General Conference A" have, besides the "Western District Conference," organized a "Northern District Conference" for Canada and a "Pacific District Conference." Russian Mennonites are a large majority in these conferences. We will probably not have too high an estimate when we say that the number of Russian Mennonites belonging to the "General Conference A" is 7,000 members and 15,000 adherents.

§56 g) Following are some addresses of today's (1910) leading brethren of Russian (or West Prussian) descent, who, in association with the "General Conference A," belong to various district conferences: David Goerz, Newton, KS; J.J. Balzer, Altona, Manitoba; Heinrich Banmann, Goessel, KS; David Unruh, Goessel, KS; C.F. Claassen, Newton, KS; A.J. Wiebe, Paso, CA; J. Neufeld, Dallas, OR; David A. Schmidt, Newton, KS; Jakob B. Frey (missionary to Indians), Tuba, AZ; Henry Schroeder (missionary to Indians), Tuba, AZ; G. Harder, White Water, KS; J.W. Kliewer, Berne, IN; C.C. Wedel, Canton, KS; H.R. Voth (former missionary to Indians); P.R. Voth; G.N. Harms; and J.R. Toews (subject to errors). For addresses of the teachers at Bethel College and missionaries in India, see below, in connection with these institutions.

§57 5. A separate group of Russian Mennonites in North America are the **Hutterian Brethren** (cf. Part I, §4, f), who, as we know, emigrated almost to the last man. They reside predominantly in Dakota in 12

churches or "Bruderhoefen" (colonies with community of property) with ca. 250 families and 1,500 adherents in total. As far as we know, they belong to none of the known conferences, but they gladly accept their ministers and, regarding regeneration and sanctification, take a position much closer to ours than was the case earlier (perhaps they have the same basic understanding). One of their own, Br. Elias Walter in Frankfort, SD, has published a short history of their fellowship entitled, *Wie kamen die Hutterischen Brueder nach Amerika*. This story confirms all we very briefly stated about this group in Part I and contains fascinatingly interesting historical information. They are also beginning to do research about the descendants of their brothers in the faith who long ago were forced to accept Catholicism in Austria-Hungary: the Haban people so-called today (Haban = "Bruderhof" in Moravia in earlier days). These Haban people still have some historic recollections and some memories of preceding centuries, but the concept of their ancestors is beyond them. Evident among our Hutterian Brethren, as everywhere in all parts of our community of believers, is movement toward a life of interest in history and a stirring of spiritual life. God obviously still has tasks and grace for all branches of our scattered Old Evangelical family.

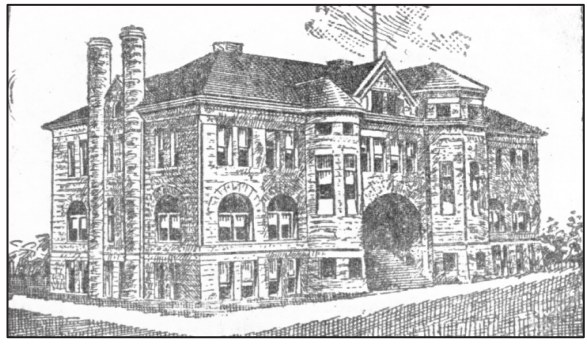
§58 6. After careful consideration of the numerous (although quite contradictory) statements,[104] the **number** of Russian Mennonites in America can be estimated at approximately **40,000** persons (including all adherents). Of these, about 15,000 belong to the churches associated with the "General Conference A," 10,000 are members of the Mennonite Brethren churches, and 14,000 make up the ca. 10 groups of churches of the denomination led by the elders Gerhard Wiebe (of Bergthal) and Johann Wiebe (of the Grossfuerstenland church), residing mainly in Canada.

§59 7. The Mennonite brothers who immigrated to America from **West Prussia** in the second half or at the end of the previous century, of whom we spoke very briefly above, are only mentioned here. We cannot devote a section to the subject due to our limited knowledge about it. As far as we know, they all belong to the "General Conference A" and live scattered in the Western, Northern, and Pacific District Conferences. We listed the names of ministers in their midst from the 1894 statistics above. Compared to the Russians, the West Prussians

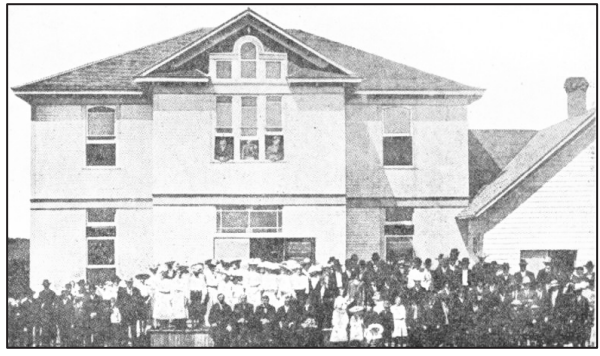
[104] Those by Prof. C.H. Wedel are the most reliable.

may represent one-tenth. — The church near Beatrice, Nebraska, which immigrated in the seventies, existed in the nineties and also the beginning of this century (and apparently still exists; see its staff of ministers in the 1894 list of ministers of the "General Conference A" with the address, "Beatrice, NE"). Their elder was Gerhard Penner. We also mentioned the "Zion Church" led by Elder Leonhard Sudermann. — Later, a certain Elder Regier immigrated with a sizeable church. We have no more precise information, however. The church, whose ministers are listed with the "Elbing, KS" address, we likewise consider West Prussian.

We make these uncertain statements in the hope that the writers of Mennonite history succeeding us will find the connection. We would be happy in the knowledge that the last remnants of the decidedly "non-resistant" West Prussian Mennonites, who could no longer attain the right of domicile with exemption from military service in Russia, have been identified and recorded in history.



10. Bethel College, Newton, Kansas



11. Bruderthaler meetinghouse in Dalmeny, Saskatechwan

12. Bethany Hospital in Gotebo, Oklahoma

13. Daniel K. Cassel, author of Geschichte der Mennoniten *(Philadelphia, 1890)*

VI. Schools, Welfare Endeavors, Periodicals, and Foreign Missions of the Russian Mennonites in North America

1) Schools

§60 a) No matter how difficult their beginning, wherever a group of Mennonites settles, they open a school the first winter. This is also true of our Russians in America. One section would have nothing to do with the American ("English") elementary schools and tolerated only "German" schools (of the Russian-Mennonite type before the reform). This is true of the church founded by Johann Wiebe and Gerhard Wiebe in the extreme north. That church is only now gradually becoming adapted to joint use of the English state schools (although not without reservations and conflicts: see the "Union Jack" controversy above!). Right at the beginning, most of those (possibly all) who settled in Kansas and the neighboring states, founded a large number of "German schools" (or "society schools") with intensive religious instruction as advocated by such men as Richert, Gaeddert, David Goerz, and other like-minded individuals. In these "German schools," teachers from their own midst taught during the months outside of obligatory state instruction. They were judged and directed by knowledgeable men, such as those just mentioned. Many a young Mennonite taught "German" in summer (or spring and fall) and studied English in winter. Many soon passed the required, highly simplified examinations (in stages, from time to time), became certified state teachers, and instructed "English" according to the state program in winter and some four months according to the "Mennonite" program. Soon, however, they contemplated "higher," i.e., continuing, education schools similar to the concept brought along from Russia and according to the model implemented by Heinrich Franz, Hermann Janzen, and others. These were private and secondary schools. The first continuing education school, to our knowledge, was the one in Halstead, KS. It was founded in 1882 by our churches, which (with "Alexanderwohl" as the largest church at the center) united as the "Kansas Conference" and then as expanded the "Western District Conference" in association with the "General Conference."

§61 b) Eleven years later, with the goodwill of this conference, "Bethel College" in Newton, KS, was founded. This was a "college" of the American type, higher than a grammar school[105] and lower than a uni-

[105] Not including the lower classes.

versity in Germany and Russia, somewhat similar to a lyceum in Russia. — The English and American school type has no exact equivalent in any framework in continental Europe. — Initially, Bethel College was to be considered as the highest central institute of the "General Conference A," but that idea was soon discarded. A new college, more Anglo-American than Bethel, was established in Bluffton. It was approved by the "Central District Conference of the General Conference A," consisting of Old American or Swiss Mennonites (cf. footnote 125, "Comment"). Prof. C.H. Wedel was the head of the faculty of Bethel College from the first day of its existence until his death on March 28 of this year (cf. Part II, §5 above).

§62 In order that we as Russians can get an idea of what Bethel College is like, we copy what appears to be the essential parts of the "Seventeenth Syllabus."

Bethel College, Newton, KS, 1909–1910

*"**The Board of Directors**: Rev. David Goerz, Newton, KS; Rev. H. Banmann, Canton, KS; Jacob Isaac, Moundridge, KS; D.J. Regier, Moundridge, KS; H.J. Goertz, Mountain Lake, MN; Rev. A. Ratzlaff, Buhler, KS; Rev. Jakob W. Penner, Hillsboro, KS; J.G. Regier, Newton, KS; and Rev. Jacob H. Langenwalter, Halstead, KS.*

*"**Officials**: David Goerz, president, J.W. Regier, vice president, Jacob Isaac, secretary, and J.G. Regier, treasurer.*

*"**Substitue for the non-resident director**: Rev. J.W. Regier, Elbing, KS, for H.P. Goertz.*

*"**Auditing committee**: J.W. Regier, J.H. Langenwalter, and D.J. Regier.*

*"**Faculty**: Rev. C.H. Wedel, M.A.,[106] professor of biblical literature and ethics, chairman of the faculty. Gustav A. Haury, professor of Latin language and rhetoric, secretary of the faculty. P.J. Wedel, B.A.,[107] science professor. D.H. Richert, professor of mathematics and national economy. Emil R. Riesen, B.A., professor of German literature and pedagogy. P.D. Amstutz, history and English literature professor. Rev. P.H. Richert, instructor in academic subjects. D.A. Hirschler, professor of instrumental music and music theory . . . [?] . . . professor of vocal music, director of the choir. C.N. Parsons, superintendent of Bethel Commercial College. Miss Lizzie Wirkler, instructor in drawing and painting. Miss Alice Martin, instructor in elocution and physical culture. Rev. David Goerz, business manager. P.D. Amstutz, assistant business manager.*

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[106] Master of Arts, Bachelor of Arts — Grade of Scholar.

[107] *Idem.*

*"**The 1909–1910 school year** is divided into two semesters of 18 weeks each. The calendar of the school year is as follows: September 1 — beginning of school year. December 22 — beginning of Christmas vacation. January 3 — end of Christmas vacation. January 14 — end of first semester. January 17 —beginning of second semester. May 26 — school close (commencement). The school is closed two days for Thanksgiving Day; instruction is also interrupted on Good Friday and Easter Monday. — Setting of dates for concerts and addresses occurs in the course of the school year.*

*"**Bethel College** was founded and is maintained by Bethel College Corporation of the Mennonites of North America and is, therefore, directed by same. The corporation directs Bethel College through its board of directors, the members of which are elected at the annual meeting in accordance with the statutes of the company.*

*"**History and purpose**: Bethel College is rooted in the education endeavors of the Mennonites who, since 1873, immigrated from Europe to Kansas and other states of the Union. They soon realized that a church community in this country must itself create the institutions commensurate with its peculiarities. Lacking was a school where German and English and the truths of Holy Scriptures are taught. This provides continuing education in a Mennonite institution, and that in a manner enabling teachers,[108] suitable for our circles in church and district schools, to acquire the required knowledge. Moreover, it enables Sunday school teachers and workers in the areas of home and foreign missions to gain the desired preparation. It also enables those desiring to equip themselves for the serious tasks of life in general to acquire a thorough knowledge.*

"To serve these purposes, the Kansas Conference of Mennonites founded and maintained a continuing education school in 1882. To avoid a recurring annual deficit and increase the capacity of the institution, energetic school friends took up the task of raising a maintenance fund. Their efforts were successful, and by employing more instructors, the desired expansion of the school appeared to be a possibility. Legal incorporation of the school proved to be practical and desirable for raising the school fund, but that meant permanent localization of the institution. Halstead had only been the temporary home of the continuing education school. The Kansas Conference convened for a special session in 1887, to consult about this matter and to decide whether to accept an offer made to the school committee by the city of Newton on condition that the Mennonites build their expanded school there. The conference was not in a position to accept the Newton offer, but supported a motion to form a Mennonite school society with a view to founding and maintaining a Mennonite institution in Newton, KS, called 'Bethel College.' Immediately after that session, a society with a thorough grasp of the matter took shape. In a few days this developed

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[108] See Part I, §II, c, footnote 14 [English translation].

into a corporation organized according to state law. According to its statutes, the society assumed the task of raising the required funds, erecting the appropriate buildings, and taking care of the school's needs.

"The purpose pursued by the Bethel College Corporation with the institution founded by it is the very same as that which the continuing education school served. The Western District Conference, at its session in the fall of 1892, handed over the task of the continuing education school and the higher education of our youth to the new institution. It is the desire of the Bethel College Corporation to offer our youth an institution in which they can acquire a sound Christian elementary and higher education based on our confession. This will enable them to stand equipped for the duties of life in general and in particular to serve in the building up of our fellowship as prepared workers.

"The curriculum of Bethel College is organized to correspond to the general education needs of our churches as well as to offer the desired schooling to those who wish to prepare themselves for advanced careers. The entire curriculum is divided into three sections: the academic[109] and college course, as well as a number of special departments such as music, business, art, elocution, and physical training.

"1. ***The academic section.*** *Purpose and task: The purpose of instruction in the academic section is to prepare the student for college or university entrance, so its work is in line with that of our good high schools.[110] This section of our institution, with its Religion and German branches of instruction, should enjoy special favor in our circles. Those who do not want to complete a full course can easily select suitable subjects here. In the first place, the curriculum of our academic section has continuing education in one's own college course in view, and, in most of the departments, the same teachers instruct in both sections.*

"The conditions of admission to the academic section are the same as those in other schools of similar type. Prospective students should bring along their last certificate. In cases where there is no proof of a good public education a special entrance examination is required. It is only in exceptional cases that the college will accept students less than fourteen years of age.

"The academic section consists of ***three courses*** *arranged in the following order of subjects of instruction:*

1) German-English academic course [four years] . . .

2) English academic course [four years] . . .

3) Academic Bible course [five years] . . .

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[109] The "academic course" of Bethel College (according to the American system) comprises approximately the program of classes 3–6 of the middle grammar school, Latin only in the 3rd and 4th "academic classes," 4 hours weekly. — Then the "college course" supplements the program of the upper grammar school class and advances beyond it to become the academic course as taught in Europe.

[110] According to the American way of speaking; in Europe "Hochschule" refers to universities and institutions on that level.

"The academic Bible course consists of a combination of the biblical and church history subjects of the Academic and College Section and the addition of such other branches essentially required for a satisfying study of these subjects. We recommend it to students who want to prepare themselves in a short time for special religious work in school or church. It can be altered according to the educational level already attained by the student or by the purpose the student may have in mind. In general, we solicit students with a certain degree of maturity. We presuppose grammatically correct knowledge of the German language. Any deviation from the summary presented here requires approval of the faculty. Completion of this course includes working through fifteen academic and five college subjects (units). This forms a special program of education offered by our school. Students transferring to higher schools must, in every case, determine how many credits for the completion of the course they will receive at registration. — . . .

"2. The ***college section*** *consists of a number of related subjects of instruction, completion of which leads to a bachelor degree. The instruction commences with three courses in the areas of philosophy, literature, and science. We offer the first two years of instruction in each course and we will provide information concerning further development of these courses[111] in the subsequent syllabi. Also offered as part of the college section are a number of suitably selected biblical and theological subjects, which should claim the interest of our young people who are studying.*

"The conditions of entrance into the college section are the same as those at other institutions of a similar category. We accept without further ado anyone who has completed our academic course or produces a certificate issued by another college of equal scientific rigor. Other applicants must take a special test and catch up where they are behind. Special students must provide proof that they are capable of pursuing the desired subjects with comprehension. — . . .

"The college course has been raised to such an intellectual level that it can hold its own very well in comparison with other similar institutions of our country. Hence, young people in our circles should first examine the program offered here before deciding to pursue their studies elsewhere. — . . .

*"****Entrance conditions****. Bethel College is open to students of* ***both sexes*** *and recruits them within our churches. The college is glad to be of service to other circles as well. Students from Mennonite churches should provide a recommendation from the minister concerned. As noted above, we accept students less than fourteen year of age only in exceptional cases. All first-time students must check in and register for the correct class on the day before school opening. Part-time students are welcome and can choose their courses, which are subject to faculty approval. We expect prompt advance payment of tuition and room rent[112] for at least one term before the student concerned goes to a class.*

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111 Not yet being taught.

112 Place in a dormitory room.

*"**Expenses**. When entering the institution, every student pays an annual enrolment fee of one dollar, which covers the cost of certificates. Diplomas are an extra charge. — Students who can present allocations[113] based on school legislation pay nothing for tuition, but they do pay for music, elocution, commercial courses, and instruction in the section of plastic arts. Because these subjects are not part of the regular curriculum, there will be an extra charge. For other students, tuition is $18 for each of the two semesters. Advance payment at the beginning of each semester is expected. Charges for board in the dining halls of the college amount to $2.25–$2.50 per week, with strict advance payment at the start of each semester.*

*"The **school's rules of order** are the same as those observed in every Christian family. All students (especially the younger ones) are subject to supervision of the president, the secretary of the faculty, and the overseer, as well as the other teachers. The main building is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and for fixed meetings. It is closed on Saturday morning. During janitorial time, music students must arrange practice hours in the music room with the secretary of the faculty. The library is closed Saturday morning and all day Sunday. There is to be no studying in the chapel. Committees must conduct their sessions in the room arranged for that purpose only. It is against the rules to talk loudly in the main building and to damage the walls with graffiti, etc. Students may lead visitors through the building, but they must avoid making unnecessary noise, especially when instruction is in progress.*

"In the dormitories, 6:00 a.m. is the hour for rising and 10:00 p.m. is the hour for retiring. After 10:00 p.m. all noise is prohibited. Recreation time is the noon hour and 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. Saturday afternoon is free for necessary business in the city. Students must arrange other visits to town with the overseer. The remaining time is set aside for studying. Students may not visit each other during study hours. The students must keep their rooms and the halls in order and naturally make a great effort to behave politely toward one another and the teachers and superiors of the institution. Male and female students may not go on joint outings.

"Women may not receive visits by men in the Ladies' Cottage unless they make arrangements through the resident teacher or the overseers. Such visits may occur only in the reception room provided for the purpose and not in the girls' study rooms. We do not permit so-called "acquaintanceship" visits.

"Students are advised not to take too many courses. Eighteen to twenty weekly hours of instruction are considered a normal work quota, but that does not include such extras as music, etc. Those engaged in extra-curricular studies must reduce their regular program.

"Concerts and other formal activities by students require pre-approval of the faculty. No meeting can be fixed without their permission. Whoever wants to give instruction at the school or outside of it must arrange that with the faculty.

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113 We believe this refers to children of society members who contribute a determined minimum sum.

"We accept students in the institution only on the condition that they will promise to submit to its rules and regulations.

*"**Worship services**. All students are required to attend a daily brief morning and evening service conducted in both German and English.*

"Every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., an institutional worship service is conducted in German. This is followed by Sunday school. It is the duty of every student to attend these worship services and deviation from this rule is, for obvious reasons, permitted only in exceptional cases. The young people's society of the institution, which meets every fourteen days on Sunday afternoon, likewise offers the students a very suitable opportunity for mutual promotion of spiritual life." . . .

Connected with Bethel College is a male and a girls' **boarding school** as well as a **deaconess** school.

§63 c) **Brief survey of Professor Wedel's life** (from *Mennonitische Blaetter*,[114] 1910, № 6).

Professor C.H. Wedel of Bethel College

(† March 28, 1910, in Newton, KS)

"The sudden passing of Prof. Wedel signifies a great loss for our brethren in the western United States. In the sixteen years under his leadership, Bethel College has grown to be the most important educational institution of those brethren. Indeed, a fair number of our German-speaking brethren read Monatsblaetter von Bethel College, *which is published by him, and they know what a great contribution the deceased has made to the spread of a thorough knowledge of both theology in general and the particular story of our Mennonite people. His various writings speak of our past and the development of our fellowship. These are highly esteemed in a range of circles . . .*

"He attained an age of almost 50 years. He saw the light of day on May 12, 1860 in Margenau, in the Molotschna Colony of Southern Russia. His father[115] was a teacher in Alexanderwohl from 1863 to 1874 and moved to Kansas in 1874. This occurred during the great emigration of the Russian[116] brethren due to the introduction of general compulsory military service in Russia. C.H. Wedel had a penchant for reading and learning beginning in his youth. By teaching school, he began early to earn something and save enough from his meager monthly salary of $10 to enable him to gradually acquire a small library and continue his education even further by self-study. He taught German School during the winter months when he was between the ages of sixteen to twenty (1876–1880). To increase his knowledge of the English language and to enable himself to instruct at public

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[114] With thankful expression of our commitment to the editorial staff.

[115] Cf. Part II, §5 above.

[116] We write: "the Russian Mennonite."

schools, he took up studies in the English school at Marion Centre in the spring of 1880. At the end of the summer course, he already received a certificate which entitled him to teach in public schools for one year.

"Meanwhile his attention was drawn to the fairly new missionary work among the Indians. In January 1881, he applied for service and was employed in the fall of the same year. In February 1882, however, the Darlington Station, where he worked under the leadership of Missionary Haury, burned down. That caused missionary operations to come to a halt. An eye disease contracted by Br. Wedel caused him to leave missionary service for the time being.

"Now he concentrated with all his strength on the occupation which was most suited to his talents: that of serving the fellowship as preacher and teacher. In 1884, we see him in Bloomfield,[117] New Jersey, first as student and later as assistant teacher. The proximity of New York and Philadelphia provided abundant opportunities to acquire an all-round education. His good results are evidence that he made the most of it.

"Then, in 1890, he received a call from the Mennonite conference's continuing education school in Halstead, KS. He followed the call and remained at the school as second teacher until 1893.

"When our brethren opened Bethel College in Newton, C.H. Wedel became its director and the instructor of biblical subjects. As is evident from the eulogy by H.R. Voth, he was richly blessed in his work as teacher and educator. His broad general knowledge, his thorough instruction seasoned with wholesome humor, and, above all, his fervent piety as revealed in his sermons and his life, have won him the esteem and love of his students, now scattered far and wide. His memory will also remain a blessing beyond the scope of his immediate field of work. His captivating, didactic lectures, his sound, edifying sermons, which he preached in the churches and on special occasions, were always highly appreciated and will not be easily forgotten. We remind the reader of the jubilee celebration of the General Conference near Beatrice two years ago, at which Br. Wedel delivered a most excellent address (see discussion of the commemorative volume on page 72 of the Mennonitische Blaetter *of 1909).*

"In the year 1907, our now deceased brother was appointed president of the American Board of Missions.

"He was married to a daughter of Minister H. Richert[118] of Alexanderwohl since 1891. Three children, two sons and one daughter, and the widow mourn his passing.

"Br. Wedel was not a man who strove to become publicly known. One seldom saw him at conventions and other public meetings. He did, however, take a number of trips, some of which were longer than others. He visited the mission stations in

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117 Presbyterian University.

118 See his biography below.

Oklahoma and Arizona, and traveled through Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and Russia in the years 1896 and 1898 . . .

"He preached his last sermon on Palm Sunday, but was unable to finish it due to a stroke. His hour of release struck on Easter Monday, March 28. We celebrated his funeral on March 31 in the chapel of Bethel College. The entire student body paid their beloved teacher the last honors by walking in the funeral procession to the cemetery three-and-a-half miles from Newton. Before departing the gravesite, a student quartet sang one of his favorite songs.

"The officials of Bethel College appointed Br. P.H. Richert[119] of Goessel, KS, to take his place . . ."

§64 d) Impressions of Prof. Wedel's personality as told by a Russian Mennonite:

"It is said that distance transfigures, hope awakens, but nearness disappoints in that it opens the eye to reality. I have not experienced such disappointment in my closer acquaintance with Professor Wedel. On the contrary, the better I learned to know him, the greater the man appeared to me. He has shown me, the timid village schoolteacher, much goodness. His heart-winning ways soon helped me overcome every timidity. When I arrived at Bethel College, all rooms for student accommodation were already rented out, so the professor arranged an attic room in his house for me. I had free access to his abundant library. He also drew my attention to important works in the library of the institution, e.g., Codex Teplensis, Martyrs' Mirror, *and others. He gave me a book by Elder Wiebe of the Bergthal (church) colony to read as a model of a specific Mennonite publication. It contains the story of this church's immigration to America. Characteristic is the author's timorousness in the face of everything new, especially all endeavors in education.*

Most interesting was Wedel's mode of instruction. The rich inflow of ideas was overwhelming. His lectures furnished the impulse to investigate the subjects concerned more thoroughly. The abundance of his knowledge, the wealth of ideas always impressed me anew with his greatness. His understanding of certain weaknesses of students, borne up by wholesome humor, showed itself in appropriate places by mischievous remarks, which, however, never injured (à la Gellert). He was always nice and polite to students. He never allowed himself to make offending or coarse remarks, even if a student's answers were inadequate.

I recall how, on one occasion, he expressed dissatisfaction at the tactlessness of a student, without, however, naming the person concerned. The latter had sent an essay, which had been reviewed and corrected in class by the professor, for publication to the editorial staff of a local newspaper. To him, mere pretense, all bragging, e.g., making yourself as a student look more clever than you really are, was repugnant.

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[119] Wedel's brother-in-law.

Sometimes he regretted, partly in jest, partly in all seriousness, that through the many inessentials of institutional life (too frequent attendance at lectures[120] in Newton, at musical and vocal performances, football games, etc.), the necessary mental concentration suffered. He preferred to withdraw from debates at conventions. Referring to himself, he said he was not a man of the public.

Participation in missions was a matter of the heart to him. As president of the Board of Missions, he had relations with all Mennonite missionaries among the Indians. Every Monday evening he spent an hour with the five mission apprentices of the institution talking in the English language about the 'history of missions' in his study. I participated in these sessions as listener, although I understood little, especially in the beginning. I was astonished at how widely read he was and how, thanks to his memory, he always had everything handy.

Although he strove always and everywhere to develop denominational firmness, he was broad-minded enough to acknowledge the good in the other American denominations. Indeed, he emphasized many an advantage evident in their church procedures. Not to his liking, however, was the American practice of frequently transferring allegiance from one fellowship to another. To such, he occasionally applied the expression 'street-car Christians.' 'The strength of the Mennonites lies in their history'; these are his words. He remembered his old homeland with reverence. Being an American, he naturally could not approve of our political and state-church relationships, but he was never in a hurry to deliver derogatory judgments as one is accustomed to hearing from English Americans. He understood what has become history in our fatherland. He said he had once begun to make a special study of Russian history, but, due to much other work, had to lay that study aside. He had followed the Russian-Japanese war with much interest! The Zusima naval battle had had an especially depressing effect on him. The professor had also read portions of Russian literature, among other things, Detstvo, *by L.N. Tolstoy . . . One evening he surprised us with a word-for-word recitation in the Russian language of the fable about the domestic rooster and two maids. As a school boy in Russia, he had memorized this story from the Golotuzov.*

He believed one of the reasons for the emergence of Russian nihilism was the study of scientific disciplines at the cost of classical education. — The Holy Land held a special attraction for him. He was of the opinion that his life would lack something if he didn't get to see the Holy Land personally. At every opportunity, he recommended the works of Pastor Schneller[121] to his students. When Pastor Schneller came to America one winter, Professor Wedel invited him to come to Kansas. The answer received was in the affirmative. Unexpectedly, however, Pastor Schneller was unable to keep his appointment.

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120 Public addresses.

121 Chaplain of an orphanage in Palestine.

*Professor Wedel also had to face opposition. At one time, the most conservative in the Mennonite churches took a stand against him. The occasion for such disapproval was publication of an article by Prof. Wedel: 'Concerning New Testament Textual Criticism' (*Monatsblaetter*, 1904, № 5, 6, 7). Some tended to believe that such presentation of the human aspect of the history of the origin of the New Testament was too close to rationalism. Some suspected (although this was not the case) that higher textual criticism was making inroads at the college. Others disapproved of the fact that senior students had permission to accompany female students on the way to the city, either to the evening worship service or to a lecture. They also disapproved of a social evening during the first week of school. But these voices of the dissatisfied have in time all died away.*

The professor communicated with the students in the German language. In the family, German was spoken at the noon meal and English at the supper table. Never, during the entire period, have I heard the sons of the professor speak German to each other. The six professors alternately spoke in the morning service, led in the German language by professors C.H. Wedel and P. Richert. He instructed Bible knowledge, doctrine, general church history, Mennonite history, history of German literature, and Greek grammar."

§65 e) Wedel's funeral oration, dedicated to him by his friend of many years, Rev. H.R. Voth (the author of the biographical material published in *Mennonitische Blaetter*), adds some distinctive strokes to Wedel's character portrait. In his early youth, Wedel was a quiet, pious boy. He attended few social events, because his mind was always set on spiritually higher things. His view of friendship is evident from a sentence in a letter to Rev. Voth written in his youth: "May the Lord be with you! May He unite us and be the third in our union." On another occasion, he writes, "May the dear Savior take you and me in His arms and guide us through the valley of the shadow of death until we stand before His throne . . . I too have found my Savior, and prayer is the breath of the child of God." — As early as thirty years before his death, doctors told him that he was suffering from a lung disease, which could not but have weighed him down. Still he writes, "Transported out of the clouds into the moment of death, one is enveloped by a cold shower. The more one is preoccupied with the greatest process of living in thought and prayer, the more do the foggy shades disappear and the light of eternal life brighten the gloomy path of death. How glorious to be able to lay down one's walking staff . . . and enter the land of sight, where another house is prepared for us." — That is the genuine, somewhat strongly sentimental pietism, which influenced us during our years of childhood and youth in the Gnadenfeld Church. "Brethren" and minis-

ters like Bernhard Harder, Heinrich Richert, Heinrich Dirks (missionary), and others were the leaders who inspired us. Some became superficial pietists, weepy, yet not morally strong. For others, Pietism was the cradle and the good kindergarten that led to a true and firm fear of God. They became Christ-believing human beings of culture and men of progress. Knowing they were "safe in the arms of a loving Savior," they proved "that, while clinging to our faith in our dear Savior, we can be strong and effective intellectually and culturally" in the cause of humanity and the kingdom of God. — Thus, Wedel! Thus already his father and his brother Peter H. († missionary). — Entirely in keeping with what all more gifted, believing young men were attracted to at that time, he was ardently excited about foreign missions. The impossibility of becoming a missionary himself, no doubt due to his physical weakness, was very painful to him. But God wanted to place him on the highest rung of the missions ladder. He became a father to many missionaries (present and future, in our view) as a teacher of theology, an authority in missions, and president of the Board of Foreign Missions of the "General Conference A." — This bright and mature person is a gift from the small group of "Old Flemish" or "Groningen" believers. May his replacements, Rev. P.H. Richert (his brother-in-law, son of Heinrich Richert) and Prof. G.A. Haury, promote Bethel College in the spirit of Wedel and along his lines.

As everyone who has read the *Monatsblaetter* for some years knows, Wedel was a real academic[122] figure and a giant among us. At the same time, he was a Bible-believing Christian, to whom "nothing that is human was strange." — He has made Bethel College into the first institution amid the Mennonites of our West Prussian-Russian lineage. (If we have constantly called Bethel College the institute of the "Russian Mennonites of the General Conference A," that is not to be taken in a legal and formal sense; it's only that most and the first initiators, promoters, and teachers of the institution have come from Russia. Mennonites of all groups participate in Bethel College to a greater or lesser degree.)

§66 f) Outside of the institution in Halstead and Newton ("Bethel College"), which we consider as the fountain of all higher education of the brethren of our lineage in North America, a number of other continuing education schools exist (besides a large number of lower "German society schools"). Already mentioned in Chapter II above is Tabor Col-

[122] "Academic," as conceived of in Europe.

lege in Hillsboro, KS. At the same location, teacher Penner maintains a private continuing education school. Such a school exists in Henderson, NE, supported by "kirchliche" and Mennonite Brethren. The same goes for Mountain Lake, MN, and Freeman, SD, where schools are supported by both (or a number of) branches of Mennonites. — In Manitoba, Canada, a "higher" school led by Prof. Heinrich Ewert is situated in Gretna and is supported by Mennonites, as are two others, one or both of which are located in Saskatchewan. One of the latter, situated in Rosthern, SK, is called German-English Academy. The special purpose of this school is to train Mennonite teachers who can attain the right to teach in government schools and, at the same time, function as good teachers of the German language and religion classes. The government recognizes this school in a friendly way as well. — While all (?) these schools instruct in both German and English, the school of the M.B. Church in Corn, OK, is mentioned as instructing only (?) "in the German language."

We believe, on the average, these schools in their educational worth and purpose correspond to our Mennonite secondary schools in Russia, with the exception of Bethel College and possibly Tabor College, which stand on a much higher level. — It is entirely possible that our description of the above institutions and of those that follow may be incomplete and may also contain errors.

2) Welfare Institutions **§67**

These institutions are: the new deaconess home (training of deaconesses) connected with the Bethel College School Society in Newton, KS; the hospital near Goessel, KS, maintained by a society from various groups of Mennonites; the home for orphans and seniors in Hillsboro, KS (see the Krimmer M.B. Church above); a hospital in Mountain Lake, MN, maintained by various churches of Russian Mennonites.

A range of support associations practice welfare through Aid Plans, Relief Committees, fire, and hail insurance companies, etc. Elder David Goerz collected thousands of dollars for starving people in India at the end of the nineties. Three years ago, during the great famine in northeastern Russia, a Russian elder sent over a printed appeal from the provisional relief committee[123] in Halbstadt. He included it in a private letter to a young brother in Kansas, stating: "Donations began within five weeks, and after two months, our committee had received no less than 11,500 rubles!" M.B. Fast, editor of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*,

[123] Primarily to aid the Russians and Tatars.

singlehandedly gathered about 40,000 rubles for the needy Mennonite settlements in Terek, Orenburg, Samara, and Siberia. A relief committee has been established to assist the hopelessly poor families of the mentioned settlements to emigrate to America, "but [unfortunately] only for absolutely healthy persons and those in a mood to work." — Russia would prefer to allow those unable and those not in a mood to work to emigrate! — During the Spanish-American war, our Russian-American Mennonites have made large donations to the American "Red Cross."

N.B.! At present, an "old people's home, without discrimination between poor and rich" (at the same time, a type of sanatorium), is being planned in California.

§68 3) Periodicals and Books (Publications)

The first periodical essentially for Russian Mennonites was *Zur Heimat*, founded and edited by Rev. David Goerz in Halstead from 1875 to 1881. It merged with the *Christlicher Bundesbote*, edited (until today) by Rev. J.A. Sommer. This is actually not a publication of the Russian Mennonites, but the official periodical of the "General Conference A." However, Russian Mennonite readers and correspondents predominate. It is published weekly and is very well edited. Professor Wedel (in *Abriss der Geschichte der Mennoniten*, 1904) also praises the editing of the publication of the M.B. Church, the *Zionsbote* (weekly) mentioned earlier. We already spoke of the *Evangelisations-Bote* (monthly) and the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, (weekly) with which the *Herold der Wahrheit* of the Old Mennonites merged a number of years ago. This is, apparently, the most widely distributed Mennonite periodical, serving mainly to foster the private correspondence between the Mennonites of Russia and their relatives in America. It is a very important factor in the cohesion of these Mennonites. This periodical is not a church publication. If we remember correctly, its first editor was J.F. Harms, who is presently and has been for many years, editor of the *Zionsbote*. After several others, G.G. Wiens, graduate of the Halbstadt Pedagogical Secondary School, became the editor. M.B. Fast (previously mentioned), who is retiring in October 1910, followed him as editor. The *Rundschau* is in its 33rd year of publication. First published by the Mennonite Publishing Co., Elkhart, IN, it was published for a few years by the Mennonite Publishing House (of the "Old Mennonites"), Scottdale, PA. Aside from the periodicals just mentioned, there are also a larger number of local papers with a strongly American literary and political flavor. Bethel College has a huge publication arm: Wedel's numerous works in the-

ology and church history, the fine academic paper *Monatsblaetter aus Bethel College* and much other material was published here. We have already dealt with the publishing activity of the M.B. Church and have only limited knowledge of many similar publications, which come and go or perhaps continue.

4) Mission and Evangelization §69

The two topics covered in Chapters I, II, and III were foreign missions of the M.B. Church and the "Conference of the United Mennonite Brethren of North America." The foreign missions of the "Western District Conference" advances hand in hand with that of the entire "General Conference A." We write about it below. — The "Western District Conference" has carried on evangelism for some years. This has taken place mainly in the "distant north-west," especially among the Mennonites in Saskatchewan, where many different groups find themselves thrown together. Occurring here is renewal, founding of new churches, and other consolidation and rescue work. In the current quarter (fall of 1910), a baptism was announced. Among others, two married couples and two married women (whose husbands had been baptized earlier) were baptized as "believers." (We understand they were all Mennonites.) In the church thus brought together, there were persons (Mennonite church members) who had not attended a communion service for ten years. The "evangelist" of this conference is a certain Br. Toews. — All Mennonite groups appear to interpret "evangelization" as the work of itinerant preaching among Mennonites, whereas city missions, missions among colored people in North Carolina and the like, is designated as "foreign missions." The churches of the "Western District Conference" and the "General Conference A" carry on city missions jointly.

VII. Concluding Remarks §70

Our Russian Mennonite brothers in America are getting along fine and are doing well. The temptation exits to envy them more than to thank God for them; we are careful, however, to omit the former and practice the latter.

We have decided not to discuss the issue of justification or non-justification of the emigration. May what we and other opponents of the emigration said in Part I, "Military Service and Emigration to America" (e.g., Pastor Hans, Elder Jakob Wiebe), balance what was presented here. To this day, we believe that everything happened according to God's will (for those who stayed behind as well as for those who left) and that it was for the best of all. Neither the negative predictions that served to frighten the emigrants, nor those that threatened the people who remained have come to pass until this very day (1910).

Are the American Mennonites assured of exemption from military service? — In addition to the re-assuring legislation by single states, the Congress of the United States has issued a legal ordinance on January 24, 1903, exempting all religious associations from active participation in military service. They would, however, have to refuse such participation by appealing to their religious convictions. — An identical law exists for Quakers, Mennonites, and Dunkers (German Baptist "brethren") in Canada.

For more information we refer the reader to the end of section C, "The Old Mennonites in North America."

VIII. Documentary Supplement: Heinrich Richert, a Mennonite Lay Schoolmaster and Minister of Love by God's Grace

§71 We have repeatedly mentioned the deceased Heinrich Richert in the section above (Part I, "School System" and "Staff of Ministers," Part II, Chapter V*)*. Here, at the end of the section of the book dealing with the Mennonites of Dutch-West Prussian-Russian descent, we present his biography, as a final farewell greeting to his people. By descent, he belongs to Holland, by birth to West Prussia, by development and maturation to Russia, and by twenty years of activity, sickness, and death, to America. May his life story, like a golden cord, envelop all the mentioned groups of our Mennonite family and encourage many to emulate him in his effectiveness and faithfulness. We present the document with all the details, because it portrays contemporary Mennonite life and especially that of the Mennonite schoolteacher and minister in Russia and America.

Heinrich Richert: a brief sketch of his life and work
(by Prof. C.H. Wedel; *Bundesbote-Kalender*, 1897)

"Heinrich Richert descended from a family highly respected in the circles of his church. The historical records of this family originate in Holland from where its ancestors came to Prussia. According to old traditions and records, a certain Knels Richert, a respectable shoemaker by trade, joined the Mennonite Church in Danzig in 1632. The family's reliable family tree begins with him.

"Richert's ancestors were healthy people who departed from this life at a ripe old age. His grandfather was seventy-four years old when he died as a respectable assistant minister in 1845. His grandmother reached the age of seventy-two years. His father, David Richert, was born in 1806 and likewise reached the age of seventy-two years, thus participating in the pioneer years of settlement on American soil. Richert's mother (nee Duerks) was born in the memorable year of 1812 and entered her heavenly home as a Christian tested by suffering. Heinrich was the oldest of twelve children in the family. He saw the light of day on May 23, 1831. His place of birth bears the long name of 'Gross-Deutsch Kunapat.' The perceptive reader will immediately see that as an unclassical mixture of German and Polish. Although he tried his best, Richert was unable to provide information about the size and other characteristics of the village of his birth from personal recollections. From stories told by his father, he knew it lay in the Kulm lowland. He had in fact scarcely completed the first year of his life when his parents and others, like so many before them, journeyed to the big kingdom of the Tsar. Here, they established a new home in the Mennonite colony founded south of the Molotschna stream, i.e., among their brothers in the faith. Richert spent the years of his childhood and youth in the village of Alexanderwohl (established in 1819), where his parents settled.

"His childhood was marked by poverty. But Richert's parents knew Him who reveals Himself to His children even on life's rugged road. Even in his later years, he thanked God for the religious impressions received in his parental home. Old David Richert was a man of vigorous, imposing appearance, tall of stature, with a fast gait and very lively gesticulations. The author always thinks of him when trying to picture the old German Arndt. His mother's friends remembered her as a very meticulous woman. The farm life conducted on the Richert property was a very diligent one. In spite of that, their living conditions did not improve. 'Misfortune seldom passed him by,' as the saying goes. A cattle epidemic left scarcely a hoof of his stock of cattle. With crop failure, harvesting his fields was scarcely worth it. With sickness making the rounds among children, the Richert home looked like a hospital. One year, a hurricane-like cyclone roared down the mountain, threatening to destroy the whole village. Everyone feared the worst. The storm tore only a loose sheaf from the roof of most houses and broke a dry twig off one tree or the other, but made up for that by unloading all its fury on the yard of old David Richert, totally destroying his strongly built barn. Heinrich, as the oldest son, shared most deeply in such bitter experiences. Those were visitations of God, which were also of great concern to him and marked his early youth with a manly seriousness, keeping him from wanton youthful pranks.

"The village school of those days offered him very little, which he greatly regretted later. One of his teachers instructed only in the Low German language. School instruction in those days was impoverished, because our good old people lacked the insight, on the one hand, and the means, on the other. In those years, it happened that when a teacher began teaching the message of the Bible, the village was greatly agitated. The mayor summoned the 'novice' and, because his 'Mennonite' conscience was piqued, he instructed the teacher not to undertake such un-Mennonite innovations. Introduction of that branch of teaching required the permission of the village authorities. So, the village school of those days revealed a sad picture. Contemporaries, recalling their experiences, gave the impression that of all that they could remember, they were conscious of their many beatings.

"Richert's clear gift of retention must have already manifested itself in his boyhood years. He delighted in telling how old Mister Cornies, on his inspection trips, had come to see his parents and had sounded him out regarding his knowledge and, indeed, had once given him a small, printed geography book. In those days, that was truly a 'princely gift' for a schoolboy and contributed significantly to increasing his urge for learning. And his parents supported him in his passion. In spite of the meager circumstances under which the old Richert lived and the reluctance with which he did without his oldest son when it came to doing chores, the father took him to the village of Lichtfelde for some time during a number of winters to let him enjoy the instruction of the capable schoolmaster who was employed there. Many a neighbor shook his head apprehensively, because of the serious dangers to the whole village which could possibly result from the erudition of the young student, but that did not

trouble father Richert. Young Richert's inner life did not suffer harm from his school endeavors, but, on the contrary, his growth to a certain firmness is evident [?] *from the fact that the church accepted him as member by holy baptism in 1849. Peter Wedel, elder at the time, performed the sacred ceremony.*

"By diligently utilizing all opportunities offered him to perfect his school knowledge, Richert had come to the place where, with courage and joy, he accepted the proposal of a few of his acquaintances who suggested he become the schoolmaster of the still-to-be-erected school in the new village. He passed the officially prescribed examinations and, in the year 1851, moved to the newly begun village of Nikolaidorf, southeast of his home, to begin the occupation that captivated his whole soul and for which he reserved his whole love until his last days.

"The meager setting of his new personal world was entirely in keeping with his earlier scant circumstances. The school community provided a paltry building and a boarding place; and then set the teacher's salary at twenty-five rubles annually. Provisions from home were scant, and he often recounted to his own children how he lacked an appropriate Sunday suit when he began his teaching career; this was to make his children thankful for what they possessed even under needy circumstances. He took heart and asked a merchant in a nearby village to lend him the cloth needed for a suit until his finances were in better shape. The friendly retailer did not embarrass the young schoolmaster; Richert remembered this, even in his old age.

"Those who know that new settlements can seldom be associated with brilliant circumstances can correctly imagine what Richert's position was like in the initial period of his life as schoolmaster. Poverty reigned everywhere, for the Crimean War was in the offing. It was only after the war that the prosperity of the colony became proverbial. But he had learned how to move about under needy circumstances from childhood on and how to make the most of them. As was the custom at the time, his father had given him a horse. It was highly enjoyable recreation to take a ride in the open air after completing his day's work in the stuffy schoolroom. One morning, his father, with distraught countenance, came to see him. Heinrich saw immediately that something sad must have happened at home and compassionately asked what had occurred. The old Richert broke into tears and told him that thieves had stolen his best team of horses the night before and he didn't know how to continue. The son did not hesitate for a moment, but led his gallant horse out to his father and asked him to take it home, since he knew his father could get along without a horse. The old man found it difficult to accept such sacrifice of childlike love, but he was almost forced to do so, and rode away with tears of thanks.

"In his school, Richert soon worked his way up to being an expert of sorts. He was able to instruct simply but clearly, so that the villagers soon attributed the well-mannered behavior of the young people of the village to the strong influence of the young schoolmaster. This was especially evident in the religion class, which he made into a truly blessed and sacred hour. There was nothing vague about Richert's per-

sonality, which had its counterpart in the solid nature of his teaching. Today's teachers, who are educated according to the rules of scientific pedagogy, would perhaps smile sympathetically at many of the methods of those days, and not always without reason. However, the success of a teacher is finally judged by faithfulness, which Richert clearly displayed, resulting in his good reputation as a teacher. One day, one of his superiors, came to the school on his inspection trip. With expert eye he inspected the schoolroom, the pupils, and the exercise books. He listened to the instruction and left the schoolroom with kind words of recognition for the young teacher, so that Richert stood there embarrassed. That sort of thing was a rarity, for, as is well known, our people seldom express recognition to persons doing spiritual work. An individual might readily get involved in criticism and gossip, but not extend encouragement to them. And that in spite of the fact that teaching in those days was debilitating in the literal sense of the word. In most cases, the children sat crammed together in cramped, low quarters, leaving the teacher scarcely enough room to stand. With the almost complete lack of teaching materials, the knowledge simply had to be 'preached into' the pupils. Furthermore, incidental school tasks, such as assembling exercise books and trimming goose feathers for writing, regularly filled up the teacher's leisure hours. Often added to that were attacks from old-fashioned people, who insisted on being consulted first regarding school affairs, and who often only approved of what they had already had in the 'good old' days.

"The most positive contacts were made with the old, well-meaning, but very short-sighted ministers, who were incompetent to assess the schools, but naturally had a measure of oversight over them. Many residents of the village belonged to a church that had become especially entrenched in old forms. The sermons were read and spontaneous prayers were considered arrogant. The songs were sung according to old hackneyed tunes. Richert and other teachers practiced free prayer and sang in multipart harmony, to the delight of the young people. The school's day of celebration ('Glanztag') was the day of the school festival. They celebrated this day in early May, when all the flowers in southern Russia are in bloom. Then the children festooned the schoolroom with wreaths and garlands to give it a magic appearance. The entire village community came and reverently listened to three to four hours of performances. It was an uplifting school close, especially when the boys and girls who ended their school days bade their teacher farewell and received his last exhortations. On such occasions, Richert received many a show of thankfulness from students and parents. But at times he had to run a real gauntlet, when the attending minister brethren took him to task in order to sharpen his 'Mennonite' conscience, on account of his spontaneous praying and 'colorful singing.' He kept his composure, however. In laconically short order, he showed them that his methods were, as a rule, biblically correct, such that he early attained the degree of manly independence by which he distinguished himself during his entire public career.

"When he was older, Richert often told his children how God provided him with a life partner, and this without too much difficulty. Thus, on June 16, 1856, when he was joined in marriage to Anna (nee Schmidt), he began an entirely new period of life, so much more pleasant than the solitary life he had led until then. His salary slowly increased and he felt satisfied and happy in his family circle, where, in time, a healthy brood of children grew to maturity.

"In 1859, the church,[124] in an election, called Richert to serve in the holy office of minister. That naturally placed the young man into a whole world of worries and issues. His occupation as a teacher already demanded everything from him. He lacked the means to support his rapidly growing family. His lack of knowledge depressed him. Added to that was the general feeling of inability for the position with its enormous tasks. Many an unpleasant situation dominated the church, but once having understood the church's call as from the Lord, he was prepared to follow; and the present elder of the church ordained him.[125] Special difficulties faced the new servants of the Word. Both were teachers, and many of our good old people were afraid of every form of erudition, not realizing that they daily used books and songs of men who had a university education. It was up to the church to reject the old and accept the new ways. Needed was much wisdom and consideration, but also firmness. Certain circles recoiled in the face of every innovation to the extent that, when the churches were asked to contribute to Bible societies, some brethren advocated excommunicating those who followed such an 'unreasonable' request. Peter Wedel, elder at the time, was man enough not to shrink from correct innovations. As a result, many a new, blessed innovation was introduced in the Alexanderwohl church. They introduced proper general singing; and Richert dared to press for determined participation in missions. The Gnadenfeld church had brought along a lively interest in missions from Prussia and continued with its missions meetings and missions festivals in Russia. No ridicule on this matter was able to confuse the members, even though they were called 'Bommelfeste' (possible intended meaning, 'Bummlerfeste' = 'loafer' fests). That church produced the first missions apprentice, who went to Barmen for training and then to Sumatra as missionary. In his church, Richert came to be a pillar for missions endeavors. Soon missions festivals were celebrated here also, and seldom did he fail to be a main speaker.

"As preacher, Richert manifested the same solid character that distinguished his teaching activity. His addresses were simple to a large degree but sound, well thought through, and hence very edifying. There was nothing artificial, no special pathos about him. His voice was natural; his stance modest. Standing behind the pulpit was the teacher, who, in simple sentences, sought to appeal to the heart and infuse the heart with the gospel truth of salvation. What he presented was measured and had a natural solemnity about it. He dared to attack harmful circumstances.

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124 Alexanderwohl.

125 Neu-Alexanderwohl in America.

Prevalent in the church was the custom, or better called 'mis'-custom, that, while the preacher spoke the benediction at the close of the worship service, everybody remained seated, preparing for the departure. One slipped his songbook into its case; the other searched for his cap; women adjusted scarves and bonnets. Richert had the courage to instruct the church from Numbers, chapter 6, noting that Israel had received the benediction while standing; he pressed for emulation of the biblical example. It was natural for lively debate to ensue in that regard. The ministerial leadership, however, expressed itself unanimously in favor of the innovation. The church soon received the benediction in a standing position, although a few still remained seated for some time. This was not as difficult for Richert to accept; it was more difficult for them to accept his courage at reformation.

"Richert's effectiveness soon became a great blessing to the church. He moved away from the old method of only comforting and exhorting in general terms and dealt directly with the personal life, causing many to reflect seriously. For example, during a sermon for the feast of epiphany, he asked in his usual serious tone of voice: 'Alexanderwohl church, where do you have your Savior? Where do you honor Him? Where do you bring Him your treasures?' In a few years, Richert matured into what every minister is supposed to be, i.e., a witness, a witness to what God has done for the salvation of humankind and what the minister himself has come to know as precious truth in his own life relative to salvation. Richert drew his knowledge mostly from Holy Scriptures and acquired significant biblical knowledge in particular by means of his schoolwork. Whenever possible, he studied the sermons of Hofacker and, in general, liked to read writings with theological content. However, he did not allow anything to divert him from sound biblical principles. In those initial years of his official activity, there was many an occasion for this type of diversion, especially from the movement of the so-called Jerusalem Friends, which had not yet disclosed its true nature and was a source of fascination for many a more profound thinker.

"His external living conditions became significantly more pleasant when he received a call to the school in Gnadenheim in 1860. This friendly village, embedded between orchards and forests, is located scarcely a mile from Alexanderwohl. A broad street lined with trees connects the two localities. Standing in the center of the village is the brick schoolhouse, surrounded by tall trees. Here Richert lived until he emigrated to America. Here he made himself at home, as much as possible, considering the circumstances. His family occupied two living rooms, one small kitchen, and two small anterooms, but the latter were jointly used daily by seventy to eighty pupils. The cellar door was located in one of the living rooms, so it was no surprise when one of the children tumbled into the cellar one day. In this cramped living space, the parents and ten children finally learned to feel comfortable. With such a large brood of children, the householder needed to do some strict accounting, for the salary was low. Richert mended his own clothes for years. In summer, he mowed his hayfield himself, his grain field likewise, and, like his old forefathers, threshed his grain with a

threshing stone. The children had to lend a hand very early and learned how to save along with the parents. For everyone, a pair of shoes lasted two winters, although they were well-patched the second winter. In summer they went barefoot. His family was healthy and Richert was entirely in his element in Gnadenheim. School, admittedly, required a great amount of work. The village was large, but the school was small and the students had to sit in a loft. However, the children were very fond of him and his influence on the young people of the village was significant. The older people also respected the serious 'Ohm Richert.' The often reckless young men were angry with him, because, in his presence, they felt compelled to hold back in their wantonness. Richert warned the children in school against dancing and similar pleasures.

"Some young people perceived Richert as 'too pious.' On one occasion, they organized a happy evening in a neighboring house somewhat out-of-the-way, played their mouth-organs, and tried to hop about in time with the music. But, in so doing their conscience bothered them, fearing that the teacher might notice the noise and come to check up on them. Hence they had set up a sentry to avoid getting caught. Their premonition did not deceive them. Richert heard the music and the dancing and went to the house in question to put an end to their illicit activity. On opening the front door, however, they all rushed out through the opposite door as though pursued by constables. It was a pitch black night and, in their haste, the dancers collided with each other and posts and trees, leaving them with scratches and bruises, which they naturally had to take as just punishment for their evil pranks. As a result, dancing attained a worse reputation than ever, and Richert's authority only increased. His activity in that village shows what penetrating influence a steadfast educator can attain to in his community. Many of his pupils later joined the so-called 'brethren church' ('Bruedergemeinde') and arrived at other views than those of their teacher with respect to some points, but most of them may well have remembered him with thankful hearts and some let him know later that by his instruction he had stimulated them to turn to eternal matters.

"In 1869, Richert was profoundly tested in that death snatched his beloved wife from his side. Reporting her passing to a friend, he added in his humble manner: 'I did not deserve to have her.' She left him with eight children, of whom the oldest was fifteen and the youngest three years old. For some time, he sought to get along alone as best he could, but he soon realized that, with his teaching job and a large group of children without a mother, he would have difficulty. Things fell into place, when he found a second wife and mother for his children in Helena Unruh, his former pupil. Later he often told his children the story with great thankfulness to God. Missionary Dirks, who had just made plans to go to Sumatra with his young wife, married the couple and gave them Phil. 3:14 as a guide for their marriage.

"With the young wife of the schoolmaster, who shouldered a huge responsibility when taking over the care of eight children, a new period naturally began in the

friendly schoolhouse. Although these were years of hard work, Richert highly enjoyed his occupation as teacher. Considering his large family, he admittedly began to doubt whether he could persevere in that occupation. His salary, converting everything to currency, may have amounted to 500 rubles in the last years. It was scarcely sufficient to cover all the expenses connected with his position. He remained, however. His sphere of activity expanded constantly. Demands on him as a minister increased steadily, when he became a minister. His judgment counted a lot with the school boards, although he was one of the most unassuming teachers. In his village, respect for him increased. The villagers readily appealed to him for counseling when facing illness or death. Many a rich and distinguished person, who normally associated with people in other circles, sought his company and visited him at his home. His plainness and simplicity, his unaffected piety and seriousness, won their hearts.

"He joined the first group of emigrants that left the old homeland, landing on American soil with his family in August 1874. He made himself at home in the state of Kansas, 15 miles north of Newton, where his life continued 21 more years.

"The initial years in the new world were days of hard work and many worries. What Richert owned was insignificant, so he was forced to go into debt. His friends lent him money and did not press him to repay, but he wanted to fulfill his obligations and this required hard work and great thriftiness. His neighbors all lived in paneled homes; but in Richert's home, his guests still had the opportunity of viewing rough boards in the rooms. Added to that, there were the many demands arising from his position as minister, including a lot of traveling. Often he had to unhitch his team from the plow and drive out to attend to church affairs, while everyone around him was busy plowing! In many of our circles, somehow helping the minister bear such burdens was perceived as a piece of heresy. Occasionally, Richert openly told his church that the New Testament explains the relationship of the church to its spiritual workers in other terms, and no one proved him wrong. Due to this state of affairs, he often had to make special sacrifices. His ability was soon recognized by his American brethren at their regular conventions and he was elected to committees for missions and schools, requiring much travel. God obviously blessed him economically. His fields yielded plentifully, so that, already in a relatively short time, he was able to pay off all his debts and consider himself an independent farmer. With great thanks he remembered a dear friend as a creditor who granted him the amount of a year's interest for the purchase of Daechsel's Bible Commentary.

"Richert himself was now no longer a teacher, but he remained a friend of the school and devoted his full interest to it. He participated significantly in the founding and direction of the continuing education school; the founding and opening of 'Bethel' gave him great joy. Richert was generally prepared to assist in every undertaking that promised to promote the kingdom of God in the correct way, even if everything did not always correspond to his views and wishes. In the committees to which he was elected, he sought to fill his position conscientiously, and he sacrificed substantially for

the cause. He took many a trip in the cause of school and missions. The events in our mission fields occupied him day and night and he interceded in prayer on its behalf, whether in joy or sorrow, until his last days.

"Richert maintained his self confidence in consultations and conventions, as in all his relationships. He thought for himself. He was able to say 'yes,' but 'no' as well, even at the risk of completely going against the grain of a brother whom he otherwise respected highly. At times, he expressed his views in a manner that was offensive to brethren who held other views. The extreme aspect of independence is brusqueness, a weakness on his part. In order to be realistic in a biographical sketch and not overly glorify a human being, we must also point out the weaknesses and shortcomings of the personality concerned. We especially value the biography of a disciple of Christ, when it shows how the grace of God can transform a poor, sinful human being into a vessel that serves for the glory of God.

"In committees and at conventions, as preacher and pastor, in his circle of family and friends, Richert proved to be a man who, later in life, continued to mature and grow to be like his Lord. He enjoyed the esteem of his community; and to say that his passing was a great loss to his entire church is no empty generalization.

"His public career ended quickly and unexpectedly. In the fall of 1890, he attended the session of the 'General Conference' in South Dakota and, on his return trip, stopped in Nebraska. Here he preached the gospel from the pulpit for the last time. He had barely greeted his own at home, when he suffered a stroke at the table, which paralyzed certain organs in his left side and made him an invalid for the rest of his life. At first, he was confined to his bed for months on end. It was the lot of the man who had been so vigorous and happy in his work to consciously relinquish all plans and expectations for further work and activity. In the quiet recovery room he submitted peacefully to the profound inner formative work of his God until he was able to say, 'If only I have You, eternal Refuge, I want nothing more.' By spring of the following year, he had recovered again. His family and friends always hoped he would return to his former self, but his strength was broken. He could manage his farm again and even take short trips, but had to withdraw to a more quiet life. He was still able to participate with his usual lively manner in all the interests of our fellowship. When his old friends and his children visited him, how tidy, how heartily kind, how childlike and happy was his demeanor. How he thanked God for being able to occupy himself with reading in quiet days! During his last weeks of suffering, he found edification in reading the book, Christological Meditations *by William Nast, which exudes sound theology. On the last day, before his final stroke, he concluded the reading of a treatise on the mission in Cameroon.*

"As a steward, faithful even in insignificant things, he put his affairs in order. His last exhortations were for his family. He pointed them to the one thing needful, when he could do nothing publicly any more. He humbled himself before God in their midst for his brusqueness, as he called it, and his attacks of impatience, with

which his suffering was naturally connected! He confessed to his children that he was an unfaithful servant of his Lord and testified that all his hopes were based on Christ and His blood!

"The visit from Russia by his old friend and brother in the Lord, Heinrich Dirks, gave him great joy. But that was his last sunbeam. On the morning of October 12, 1895, he had a second stroke, which paralyzed his right side and left him speechless and helpless. He was carried to his bed, where he fought his last battle in a sitting position. His children, relatives, and friends hastened to his side, but everyone saw that the end was near. In the second night of his battle, one of his daughters, who lived with him, thought his release was pending, so she quickly awakened the others, but warned them to approach quietly so as not to disturb him on his journey home. But soon the patient's breast rose again and the struggle continued. The autumn weather outside was beautiful, the sun bright and mild. The contrast between the charm of nature and seriousness of death was depressing. The dying man could only press the hand of a loved one feebly now and then. He was conscious most of the time and understood the Bible verses and songs recited to him. Their father had often reminded them of Hebrews 4:16: 'Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.' This apostolic exhortation became very meaningful to them now. Their final prayer became 'Lord, come soon.' For four days and nights, the dying man experienced a severe struggle without being able to drink a single drop of water. The hour of parting struck at 10 o'clock on the morning of October 16. Now his own knew he was safe and secure, for they could sing of him: 'Victory! Victory! The fight is over; the crown is his.'

"Richert's first wife had presented him with nine children, of whom three were called to the heavenly home before him, one at a tender age and two daughters as young wives. His second marriage produced eight children, of whom one died at a young age. Thirteen children stood around his coffin. They took his mortal frame to the graveyard on October 19. His fellow ministers carried the coffin. A large number of mourners paid him the last honors. The faithful servant now rests, without the cares of this life, near the church where he spent so much time and in which his testimony for Christ had rung out so often, 'until Jesus Christ, great and majestic, will kindly awaken him.'

"May the legacy of his life remain bright, particularly for the generation growing up! Richert did not want to give a false impression. By humbly but resolutely following our Lord Jesus Christ, he has shown us how to fill an externally very simple life with meaning and eternal content. Many had a lot for which they could thank him. Hence the following may well be said of him: 'Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who have led many to righteousness, will shine like the stars forever and ever.'"

C.
The "Old Mennonites" in North America

IX. Descent, Immigration, and Dispersion of the "Old Mennonites" in North America

§72 1. With respect to **descent, peculiarities,** and even in part their **dialect**, the "Old Mennonites" of North America are **predominantly Swiss.** However, the Swiss are not the first to arrive, but rather the third.

§73 2. The **first Mennonites** to arrive in North America from Europe came from the **Netherlands**. In **1632**, twenty-four Mennonite families, members of an Amsterdam Mennonite Church, with leader Pieter Cornelis **Plockhoy** (who apparently was their minister) founded a settlement in the region of the **Delaware** River. At that time, this was the Dutch colony of "New Netherlands" with the city "New Amsterdam" (which, after being conquered by the English, were renamed New York city and New York state). This Mennonite settlement, which had entered into a friendly relationship with the local Indians, was, in the war between England and Holland, "conquered" for England by a troop of Indians (opposed to the Delaware Indians, who were friendly to the Mennonites). The Mennonite settlement was robbed of everything and burned down and most of the residents murdered (1664). After thirty years and endless wanderings (where and how is unknown), Plockhoy, old, blind, and penniless, and his aged wife came to the Mennonites in Germantown (to be mentioned farther below) and was kindly received by these his fellow believers who took care of him.

§74 3. The following historically known Mennonite immigration was carried out by **German Mennonites from Crefe1d**,[126] who settled in **Pennsylvania** and founded **Germantown** (now part of Philadelphia = "brotherly love") in association with other Germans, possibly predominantly pietists, separatists, etc. The Mennonite, and/or German immigrants, numbering thirteen families or thirty-three persons, left the port of Rotterdam on the English ship "Concord" on July 24, **1683**, and arrived at the port of Philadelphia on October 6. The crossing was recorded as a very happy and fast one! This group of Mennonites from Crefeld constituted the **nest egg** of the whole Mennonite presence and

[126] See above Part I, §136, 1.

the entire German society in North America. The names of these thirteen immigrating fathers from Crefeld, of whom, according to C.H. Wedel, "definitely most," according to D.K. Cassel, "probably all," and according to Mrs. Christine Hege, "all" were Mennonites, are as follows: Dirk, Hermann, and Abraham Isaacs [3 sons] opp den Graeff, Lenert (Leonhard) Arets, Tunes Kunderts (Anton Kunders or Konrad), Reinert Tisen (Reinhard Tysen, Theissen), Wilhelm Strepers, Jan Lensen, Peter Keurlis (Kuirlis), Jan Simens, Johann Bleikers, Abraham Tunes (Tuenies), and Jan Luecken (Luyken) "with their respective wives, children, and servants, thirteen families altogether" all former citizens of Crefeld. — The leader or authorized representative of these thirteen families was a certain Franz (Francis) Daniel **Pastorius**, a jurist from Crefeld. He was a highly educated man and deeply pious Christian belonging to the pietist-mystical[127] movement, who took a position very close to that of the Mennonites and Quakers, but, as far as is known historically, did not join them formally.

§75 4. These citizens of Crefeld had been induced to emigrate through a personal visit by **William Penn** and his agents. The state of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania = Penn's forest area), present population seven million, had been given to Penn by the king of England as hereditary property for covering a large debt owed his deceased father, the English Admiral Penn. Penn acquired this vast region from the Indians living there by friendly sales contracts. William Penn was a follower of George Fox, founder of the "Society of Friends," popularly called Quakers.[128] As a highly respected aristocrat at the court, Penn became the protector and second founder of the society. The region, which had become his property, became an autonomous colony of the British crown (until the United States of America was created). Penn wanted to carry out "a divine experiment" (make a trial) here: every religious fellowship was to be allowed to exist here freely and with equal rights, thus laying the foundation of complete religious liberty, which became basic law in the later United States of America, a first in the history of Christian states. — In Pennsylvania (the first new and permanent fatherland for Mennonites in America), land was purchased from William

[127] Cf. above Part I, §62, c.

[128] They discard every canonical church office and every form of worship, formal baptism, and formal communion (interpreting everything only spiritually), refuse the oath and military service, and take a very free position relative to the canon of Holy Scripture. One is inclined to call them "believing rationalists." In many respects, they stand very close to the German mystics (Part I, §62, c); however, they express no judgment against marriage.

Penn in 1680 at the price of 100 acres (= 40 dessjatines) for 40 shillings (= roughly twenty rubles). Of the first six historically known German land buyers, two were Mennonites: Jakob Tellner and Jacob Isaacs van Bebbern.

§76 5. Joining the mentioned German Mennonites from Crefeld in **1688** (whose names almost without exception sound genuinely Dutch to us) were seven families of **Palatinate Mennonites**, the first genuine farmers (the immigrants from Crefeld were city dwellers) who began Mennonite farming in America. New arrivals (original Swiss who had earlier fled to the Palatinate because of severe persecution) continued to follow these immigrants from the Palatinate. They came because of distress due to war and because persecution had erupted there as well.

Around the year 1700, Mennonites with the following family names of **Dutch** origin (at that time, the Hamburg-Altona Mennonites were still really Dutch, at least in their worship services) came to Germantown and surrounding areas from **north-west Germany**, especially **Hamburg-Altona** on various occasions: Karsdorp, Berends, Claessen, van Sintern, Roosen, Harmens, van Rossen, Hosters, Gaetschalk. — New immigrants came later, predominantly from the **Rhinelands**, where terrible persecutions erupted periodically in the lands of various minor despots who were princelings and minor counts. Some purely Dutch groups of Mennonites also immigrated to North America after Plockhoy, although in general very few.

Beginning in **1709**, the **Swiss** began emigrating directly from their fatherland because of horrible persecution (see farther below). Until the year 1727, these Swiss and Swiss-Palatinate immigrants came singly and in small groups. After that, "veritable throngs flowed into the land of liberty[129] from these countries" (Wedel). — By **1732**, the number of

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[129] How remarkable that our West Prussian churches remained unrelated to this movement! See above Part I, §27 ff.

Comment. Considered as "Old Mennonites" of North America are only those who immigrated before ca. 1820. Those who came later, since about 1820, are already considered as "new," more precisely as "Swiss"; also called "new" are the South Germans of this later period of immigration. From our standpoint, those who arrived until about 1850 are as "old" in their intellectual way of seeing things as those who actually call themselves "Old Mennonites" (cf. below "Swiss Mennonites in Ohio," §91, last six paragraphs). Until Oberholzer's fight for reform (a genuine "old American Mennonite" of "Swiss" descent), they have created nothing in the way of schools and the like, that might have stamped them as "new." — The majority of the immigrants of Swiss and South German descent who came after 1850 may have joined the General Conference A. It was admittedly the narrow, uneasy spirit of the Swiss, which made the "Old Men-

Mennonites who had immigrated to Pennsylvania and some neighboring regions had risen to **three thousand**. Most of them came from Germany (mainly the Palatinate) and Switzerland, with just a few arriving from Holland. What an enormous figure considering the scanty population at the time! Thus, the flood of Mennonite immigrants increased by fits and starts throughout the 18th century, Mennonites from the **Palatinate and Switzerland** making up the **essential part**.

Until 1737, emigrants received substantial **assistance** from **Dutch Mennonites** out of their "cash register for foreign needs" in Amsterdam, in addition to the uninterrupted enormous support to those suffering from persecution and war distress. But starting in 1737, the "commission for foreign needs" in Amsterdam refused to support emigrants, but continued the support for a long time of those suffering distress in their homeland. — Around the year **1820**, emigration from Switzerland took a significant upturn (although actual persecution there had already ceased). **Lancaster County** in Pennsylvania became the **center** of the Swiss Mennonites, and as such the actual main focus of Old Mennonite life in all of North America. The "Lancaster Conference," with more than 8,000 members, is the determining force in the "General Conference B" of the Old Mennonites. It is the most numerous of all associations of Mennonites in North America. — Emigration from Switzerland and the Palatinate lasted until the mid nineteenth century, at which time the Mennonitism of North America, considering itself as "Old Mennonites," had finally passed its formative period [cf. footnote 125, "Comment"]. — To be counted with the Mennonites from the Palatinate and Switzerland are the Mennonites (originally also Swiss) who came from the Alsace and Rhine-Hesse (and Bavaria) to North America in large numbers.

§77 6. As well as settling in Pennsylvania, thousands of these original Swiss Mennonites settled in the neighboring regions (which are presently the eastern states of the Union) such as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Virginia, and others.

§78 7. **Canada**, i.e., the province of Ontario, also became a place where Mennonites settled. The first settlers were those who had already been residents in North America for a long time. After the Declaration of Independence of the "United States of America," many Mennonites

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nonites" into what they are (or were). The life of the first settlers of Germantown began in an entirely different way; they were later entirely absorbed by the Swiss-South German element.

of Pennsylvania felt guilty for being subject to a government that had arisen through revolution. They began looking for a country in America "which honored the king of England"! — After support from Amsterdam ceased, English kings had assisted many emigrating Mennonites.— Thus, in **1783**, the first families moved from Pennsylvania to the province of Ontario in southern Canada, where a second Mennonite center developed next to Pennsylvania. The Mennonites settling there are said to have put their stamp on the whole region. With respect to church affairs, they soon identified with the Pennsylvanians, essentially preserving their peculiarities.

§79 8. By number and tenacity, the **Swiss Mennonites** and their comrades by faith and descent from the Palatinate, Alsace, Rhine-Hesse, etc., have prevailed over all other German and Dutch[130] elements and put a **stamp** on them which today characterizes the "Old Mennonites" of North America. This includes the peculiar dialect called "Pennsylvania German," a Swiss-South German idiom with lots of English words and expressions. — They are ultraconservative by nature: their dress, their vehicles, and their dwellings are all the same. Originally they wanted to change nothing, which is understandable considering their experience of endless gruesome persecutions, which forced them to dwell and live hidden and frightened in their original Swiss homeland and temporary homes in the Palatinate, etc. (cf. below, "Documentary Supplement"). They admittedly had to consider everybody and everything outside of their narrow framework of community and custom as enemy territory! In the new free homeland, they had to learn to "maintain" (conserve) themselves, i.e., learn to settle down and live life to the full, peacefully, firmly, and securely, and that entirely in the customary manner accepted as primitively and exclusively Christian. Then they gradually had to learn to "move forward" (progress), expanding ideally, culturally, and as a church. If, unfortunately, they have considered "conserving" as their exclusive life task for too long and postponed "progressing" for too long, they have been punished: those who held to Mennonitism remained Mennonites in sense and form, i.e., genuine "Old Mennonites," as they perceived themselves to be. However, thousands of individuals, not just those of lazy and harmful character, but many of the most efficient members and those who were healthy spir-

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[130] The Dutch Mennonites seem to have disappeared in America; one never reads about Dutch-speaking Mennonites in North America. — Among the roughly 1,300 names of Mennonite ministers in North America, we find roughly 330 Russian-West Prussian Mennonite names and perhaps half a dozen pure Dutch names.

itually/ecclesiastically and culturally/socially, were lost. The rather lazy characters may have been absorbed by ordinary, less acceptable 'Yankeedom,' but the departed good characters adorn and strengthen other Christian churches and civic involvement (e.g., Pannepacker, present governor of a state of the Union, etc.). What was most damaging was that they themselves did not maintain any good continuing education schools, not even their own elementary schools. — For more information about this, see below under "Church Development," "General Conference A" and "General Conference B," and "School System," etc.

§80 9. **Important factors affecting the initial pioneering and development period of the first Mennonites of Germantown** were the following: their relationship to the **Indians**, the **wars** raging in North America, the **slavery question,** and the arrangement of **worship services**.

a) According to their principles, they were, as a rule, on friendly terms with the Indians. However, the Mennonites as "non-resistant" people suffered much due to the numerous wars fought in order to create the United States of America: wars between the English and the French (1690, 1701–1713, 1744–1748), the English and the Spaniards (1755–1763), and during the colonies' war of independence from England (1775–1783). During this time, the various Indian tribes stood as allies or enemies of the warring powers or parties. The destruction of a Mennonite settlement, during which time the Indians murdered fifty persons, was one of many horrific experiences.

§81 b) During England's wars with other states, especially during the War of Independence, the fact that the Mennonites refused to take up arms was strongly held against them. On various occasions, force was used against them, yet most them remained true to their convictions. The state of Pennsylvania exempted them from military service in exchange for payments toward replacement personnel. — The same exemption was obtained for the Mennonites in Canada, during the wars between the United States and England. — In the second half of the 19th century, during the civil war between the northern and the southern states of the Union (1860–1864) over the question of slavery, the Mennonites, being opposed to slavery, suffered much at the hands of the southern states who fought for slavery. The northern states dealt with them according to the principle practiced in Pennsylvania (con-

cerning the guarantee regarding military service granted the Mennonites of North America at the present time, cf. above, Part II, §70).

§82 c) The response of the Mennonites to the question of slavery proved to be quite brilliant. They could not understand how the Quakers, these "friends" of everything that is just and good, and enemies of all violence and unrighteousness, could buy, keep, and sell slaves! On **April 18, 1688**, in the fifth year of their residence there, the Mennonites demonstrated "the courage of their forefathers" and, together with the mentioned Pastorius, submitted a **protest against slave trade**[131] to the nearest authority (which, like the subsequent "meetings" or boards, consisted essentially of Quakers). Following is that document, whose author or editor must naturally have been Pastorius:

To the monthly meeting taking place at Richard Worrell's

"We are opposed to the trade in human beings for the following reasons: Does anyone exist who would be pleased if he were sold and made into a slave for his entire life? How frightened many are at sea when a strange ship approaches them and they fear it might be a Turk who could arrest and sell them as slaves in Turkey! To what extent is the first-mentioned case better than what the Turks are doing? It is indeed worse when practiced by those who call themselves Christians. We are told that most of the Negroes are brought here against their will; in fact, many are stolen. They are black, to be sure, but we cannot comprehend how that is a better justification to make them slaves than to keep whites. We are told that we are to do to everyone, as we desire they do to us. No distinction is made with respect to nationality, descent, and color. Stealing and robbing people is the same as buying and trading them off. We have freedom of conscience in this country, which is right and reasonable, but freedom belongs to the body as well, unless we are dealing with a criminal, which is another matter entirely. We protest the fact that human beings are brought here, robbed, and sold against their will. In Europe, many are oppressed for conscience sake; here people are oppressed who have black skin.

"We know that we must not commit adultery, but many force others to commit adultery by separating women from their husbands and handing them over to others. Some sell the children of these poor creatures to strangers. Oh, you who do this, please consider whether you would like this to happen to you and whether this does not compromise your Christian faith. Neither the people in Holland or in Germany have gone this far. Your reputation deteriorates when it is said in Europe that the Quakers here deal with human beings like they handle cattle over there. For that reason, many do not have the courage nor the inclination to come here. Who would

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[131] According to Mrs. Anna Brons and D.K. Cassel. — "Documents in the archives in Amsterdam confirm" that the three, except for Pastorius, were Mennonites.

ever stand up for your side and defend you? We truly cannot, unless you show us that we are wrong and convince us that Christians may act like this. What in the world could be worse than to be robbed, stolen, sold as slaves in a strange country, and separated from your spouse and children?

"This is not what we desire should happen to us, so we raise a protest and declare ourselves opposed to the trade in human beings. He who recognizes that it is wrong to steal must not buy what was stolen; rather, if possible, help put an end to robbing and stealing. Those people should be released from the hands of the robbers and set free, as in Europe. That would give Pennsylvania a good reputation instead of the bad one it has on this account in other countries. Added to this is the fact that the Europeans would very much like to know how the Quakers rule their province; most behold us with envious eyes.

"If these slaves, who are considered godless and stubborn, should gang up, fight for their freedom, and treat their masters the way they were treated by them, would these masters and their wives then wage war[132] *on the poor slaves with sword in hand? Some would indeed, but do not the Negroes have as much right to fight for their freedom, as you have to keep them in servitude?*

"Consider this seriously. Is it good or bad? You have never taught us before, but if you find that it is acceptable to treat the blacks in this way, we request that you teach us lovingly that Christians have the authority to proceed in this way. That will give us peace of mind concerning this point and put at ease our friends and acquaintances in the land of our birth.

"For us it is terrible to think that people are being enslaved in this way in Pennsylvania.

"These were the proceedings at our meeting in Germantown on April 18, 1688.

"To be submitted to the monthly meeting at Richard Worrell's. — Garnot Hendriks, Franz Daniel Pastorius, Dirk opp den Graeff, Abraham opp den Graeff."

These hammer-blows against the door of the Quaker conscience prevented it from falling asleep again. These are blows with the hammer of Jesus' teaching on the handle of jurisprudence, swung by the hands of resolute, straightforward Christians and directed by a Christ-believing jurist. — As though awakened from sleep, feeling the truth, but still unclear and too listless to act, the respectable assemblies of the "Friends" reply:

i. The monthly meeting: *"After considering the above-mentioned matter at our monthly meeting in Dublin in April 30, 1688, we find it so important that we think it inappropriate for us to deal with it. We refer it for consideration to the*

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[132] The Quakers, like the Mennonites, were in principle opposed to war.

quarterly meeting, the content being more or less [?!] in accordance with the truth.— On behalf of the monthly meeting, Jo. Hart."

ii. The quarterly meeting: *"The above-mentioned matter was read to the quarterly meeting on June 4, 1688, and referred to the annual meeting. The mentioned Dirk and the two* [not three?] *others named in it are to present it to the mentioned meeting, since it is too important for this meeting to pass a resolution about this matter. Signed on behalf of the meeting: Anthony Morris."*

iii. The annual meeting: *"1688. Some German friends presented a writing concerning the legitimacy and illegitimacy of buying and keeping Negroes. It was considered inappropriate for this meeting to express a decided judgment regarding the submission, since it is closely related to many other issues. We refrain from doing so for the time being."*

The conscience of the "Friends" was awakened, however. In **1715**, after much consulting and wavering, they declared themselves opposed to overseas slave trade. In 1770, after various "warnings," the "Friends" are exhorted not to call persons who keep slaves to fill leadership positions in the church. In 1776, members of the fellowship who kept slaves were already subjected to church discipline! In **1780**, when the War of Independence against England was still on, the legislature of what was now the "state" of Pennsylvania decided to begin the obligatory and final abolition of slavery. — But, concerning the April 18, 1688, great intellectual-social action, all praise in the story is due to the Quakers, who acted according to how they understood the gospel! This was the beginning of a world reform of which earlier history knew nothing: the abolition of slavery and serfdom in the civilized (and gradually in the whole) world. Nothing like this has been recorded in world history; encyclopedias say nothing, not even the most highly-esteemed *Kleine Brockhaus*. This small know-it-all book acknowledges Pastorius (but not his [Mennonite] friends). Everything was done by the Quakers and by Wilberforce and Beecher-Stowe, who wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* We Mennonites are in fact "unhistorical."

§83 d) The first general worship service, the first preachers, and the first meetinghouse of the "Old Mennonites" of North America.

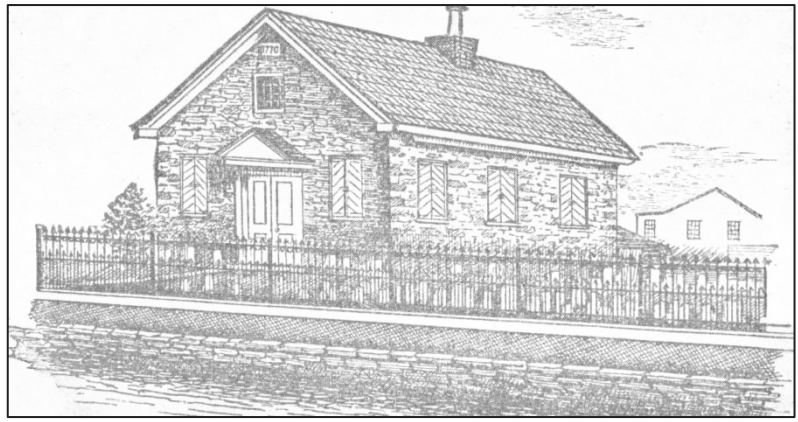
The first general worship service of the Crefeld Mennonites, among other "Pilgrim Fathers" in Germantown, was held in the house of the mentioned Tunes Kunderts (Anton Konrad) in the year of their arrival. We were unable to learn the exact date. The leader of this service is also unknown; some mention William Penn. — The **first Mennonite minister** who came to the Crefeld Mennonites and other brothers in the faith in Germantown was Willem Rittinghuysen (†

1708) from Amsterdam (according to D.K. Cassel) or from the Rhine region (according to C.H. Wedel and Mrs. Chr. Hege, who would like to include the Dutch and all other Mennonites under the "German" label). At the urging of the brethren of the Hamburg-Altona[133] Church, who insisted on order, the Germantown Church sent its mother church a letter requesting that they send over an elder who could **ordain** Rittinghuysen, because he was not fully consecrated as a bishop. However, due to the difficulties of such a journey, and after serious all-round consideration of the matter, a letter was sent to the following church brethren: Claas Behrend, Heinrich van Sintern, Paul Roosen, Harmen van Karsdorp, and Isaac van Sintern. This letter advised them, "in consideration of the emergency, to appoint and install the elected elder themselves like the apostles did. Paul and others were not appointed and installed in their office by others" . . . They were advised that, in this emergency, one of the local brethren, . . . if elected elder in harmony and peace, "could experience the blessing of the Lord without the laying on of hands by another." Four servants of the church had signed the letter: the 90-year-old bishop, Gerritt Roosen (see Part I, §136, m), Pieter van Helle, Jacob van Kampen, and Jean de Lanoi (according to D.K. Cassel).

Later, various ordained "bishops" (elders) have come to the Old Mennonites from Europe. Following is a list of sixteen ministers or bishops from around **1725**, whose names are important to our readers, because they are our brethren and fathers in the Lord, both as Christians and as Mennonites: Jacob Gaetschalk, Heinrich Kolb, Martin Kolb, Nicolaus Rittenhouse (= Rittinghuysen), Nicolaus Johnson [English corruption of "Jansen"!], Michael Ziegler, John Gorgas, John Conrads, Hans Burkholder, Christian Herr, Benedict Hirsche, Martin Baer, Johannes Bowmann [Baumann], Velti Clemmer, Daniel Langenecker, and Daniel Begtly. — We see how the Swiss element is already predominant. — The sequence of ministers or bishops of the Germantown Church until 1890 was: William Rittinghuysen, Nicholas Rittinghuysen [both names already written in English: "Rittenhouse"], Dirk Keyser, Jacob Godschall (Gaetschalk), John Gorgas, John Conrads, Jacob Funk, John Minnich, John Hellermann, Abraham Hunsicker, Henry A. Hunsicker, Frank Hunsicker, Israel Beidler, John Haldemann, A.H. Fredericks, Albert Funk, and Nathaniel Bertolet

[133] Herewith, we are correcting an imprecision in the related footnote at §108, Part I, where we wrote "Dutch"; the Hamburg-Altona Church was in fact "Dutch." — In this connection, cf. §63 (2), Part I, "Ordination."

Grubb, the present[134] "bishop," with assistant D.M. Pfautz. — The first meetinghouse of the Old Mennonites in North America was built in the year **1708** in Germantown (a wooden blockhouse). In **1770**, a house of worship made of stone replaced it. This has been used by the Mennonite Church of Germantown and kept in its original form until today.[135]



14. Meetinghouse of the first Mennonite church in North America, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (built 1770)

10. **Cultural contributions of the Germantown Mennonites and their brethren in the initial period**. §84

The minister, Willem Rittinghuysen (according to English-American pronunciation often written "Rittenhouse," spoken Rittenhaus), founded and operated the first paper mill in North America. — Around 1720, a certain man by the name of Saur, who belonged to the "Brethren" fellowship (Dunkers, German Baptist Brethren: see Part I, §13, n), founded the first German printing enterprise in their midst. Here, the first German Bible in North America was printed with energetic participation of the Mennonites, and this was before the English of North America had published an English Bible. Here also, the Mennonites were instrumental in the printing of the 1632 Mennonite "Dordrecht Confession of Faith," a songbook (*Ausbundt*, martyrs' songs) and some other things as well. — In the year 1748, the Germantown and neighboring Mennonites completed the translation and print-

[134] I.e., around 1890.

[135] *Idem.*

ing of the *Large Martyrs' Mirror* by Tielemann Jans van Braght (Bracht) (in a German typography in Ephrata, PA). The purpose of this was to strengthen them in the faith, when war clouds threatened and, for them as "non-resistant" people, when associated persecutions threatened. This translation and printing was for them a gigantic undertaking in the intellectual, economic, and technical sense, and an act of faith. — Also attributed to the German Mennonites of Germantown is the solid and fruitful establishment of the linen and wool industry in Pennsylvania.

We recount the actual story of the development of church life, the school system, missions, and publication endeavors in a chapter that follows.

X. Documentary Supplement to the Early History of the "Old Mennonites" of North America

(according to D.K. Cassel's, *Geschichte der Mennoniten*, and other sources)

§85 1. To correctly understand our North American Old Mennonite family members, we must turn back to their **early history in Switzerland**, which was the original homeland of their largest and most influential segment. We should also acquaint ourselves with the story of their **immigration** and **initial naturalization**. In so doing, we in general learn more details concerning the **second large branch** of the entire Mennonite family, i.e., the **Swiss**, in its primeval homeland and in its new homeland, North America. This second branch may, by number and importance, be competing for first place with the Dutch branch, much better known to us. At the same time, we are in a measure doing justice to our brethren in Switzerland; in Part I of our work we only occasionally touched on them, and then dealt with them in a very brief statistical survey. There are two reasons for this: in the first place, because of the originally restricted layout of our book and, secondly, lack of knowledge regarding their past, present, and general importance. We gained greater insight into the matter by studying the history of the "Old Mennonites" in North America, but that was after the layout and elaboration of Part I of the book had essentially been completed. This is our confession of guilt to the brethren in Switzerland!

In their primeval homeland, the Swiss Mennonites had dwindled to a very small remnant, representing only a memorial. This was due to the endlessly long and gruesome persecutions, expulsions, and emigrations. To the Mennonites from other European countries, they appear insignificant and odd, until we learn of their importance in North America. The approximately 1,500 Mennonites in Switzerland have no reason to be ashamed in the presence of the whole family; their children and brethren in America have (similar to what our communicator from Ringwood, OK, says the Russian Mennonites did in the western states of the Union) in large part made some of the old states what they are today. In keeping with solid and good Christian custom, they have contributed mightily to the culture of America, in no way lagging behind the English Puritan "pilgrim fathers." As related above, due to excessive conservatism, their children and brethren lost an enormous percentage of good elements to Anglo-America, yet these (like the mentioned Pannepackers, etc.) have supplied the new, great second Anglo-Saxon nation with much good blood and good spirit.

§86 2. It is of great interest that the **Reformed Swiss citizen and clergyman of the established church, Pastor Ernst Mueller** in Langnau, Canton Berne, has, in our days, justly and strictly revealed, confessed, and condemned **the reprehensible and outrageous persecution of the Swiss Mennonites by the German-Swiss churches and states**. The "Berne folk" have, ostentatiously and enthusiastically, refrained from showing him, and the Mennonites, hate and revenge, but have rather shown recognition and sympathy, and in effect, repented of the sin of their fathers (Daniel, chapter 9!). So, we also, with only the fifth petition of the Lord 's Prayer in our hearts, want to remember this nation and church, which is the most closely related to us and has treated us the most shamefully of all the Reformation churches. What Duke Alba did was natural to him; he was a convinced Jesuit and servant of Philipp II. What the officials in Zurich and Berne did was contrary to their nature as freethinking evangelicals, which is what they wanted to be. We quote a section of Pastor Mueller's "Langnau[136] Anabaptists 200 years ago" (from *Mennonitische Blaetter*,[137] 1893, № 19):

§87 **Exodus of the Anabaptists from Langnau in 1693**

"Night had set in when Uli[138] started on his way to the Maettenberg. His wife had left the house and he was following her at a distance. To him she seemed like a shadow wafting away. He wanted to keep her and yet she seemed irretrievably lost to him. Then she turned and entered the house of shoemaker, Michel Burkhalter. He saw other dark forms quickly disappearing inside. From inside the house, he heard men and women singing quietly. Uli listened and discerned the following:

Lord Jesus Christ, almighty God,
Lead us now from this distress.
It is the last hour,
Satan with his bands
Looks for us in all countries.

Your small herd is being plagued,
Persecuted, dispersed, caused to fade away,

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136 Langnau, large village in the Emme valley, Berne canton.

137 The *Mennonitische Blaetter* of Pastor van der Smissen is a truly inexhaustible mine for Mennonite history, and we cannot be surprised enough at the fact that the educated persons among the Russian Mennonites read so little of this paper.

138 Who did not belong to the Anabaptists [orig. Taeufer], but his wife was a faithful adherent.

No place on earth is left.
Your people is followed by murderers,
Only You can help.

The world laughs and mocks You,
Your followers are ridiculed.
Oppression is our lot,
Oh Lord, do have mercy,
Embrace us with Your arms.

Show Yourself merciful and mild,
Lead us through sea and wilderness wild,
Lest we perish in it.
May we be inspired by Your Spirit
And inherit the kingdom of heaven.

"Then Uli Steiner heard someone praying in a raised voice. Meanwhile, through the window near the door, dimly lit by an oil wick, which stands on the stove in the middle of the kitchen, he saw a number of people kneeling on the floor in the kitchen. They rose from the floor and sat down on benches, and then Michel Burkhalter began with his sermon.

"The hour has arrived for the people of Israel to be led out of Egyptian slavery. The provost has shown Israel the decree issued to the officials of Landshut, Burgdorf, Brandis, Trachselwald, Signau, Thun, and Oberhofen by the 'gracious lord'[139] on April 6, 1693. According to that decree, all the males aged fourteen years and over are to be registered and later examined for allegiance, i.e., in groups of twenty persons, asked to take an oath;[140] whoever refuses to do so is considered an Anabaptist. They pay twenty-five thalers for turning in a native teacher, fifty thalers for turning in a stranger. The deadline for departure from the country is Monday, the 17th of the current month of April. From each municipality, two of the most pious and most well-to-do persons are to be sent here. But they must not 'make off in vehicles at speed with their best luggage and means, leaving wife and children behind, later to become a burden to the municipality' (Book of Decrees).

"Then Michel began to speak about faith, that it is not attained by how a person conducts himself or by pressure from others. It is not the result of one's own will or of doing what everyone else does. Rather, it is a gift from the merciful God, not created by flesh or blood, but by the imprint of the Spirit of Christ on mind and heart. In the church of God, no one is compelled to believe. In our time, what the ruler believes, the majority of his subjects must confess. This is contrary to Scripture.

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139 Title of the Berne magistrate.
140 Which they refused to practice.

The government must function within the bounds of its office. In policing and punishing evil in common civil matters, it must not to go beyond the law. Fulfilling this office was also the duty of the godless heathen Nero; and God also called the heathen, King Nebuchadnezzar, His servant. The government officials must not abuse their office and cause the innocent to suffer like Pilate did. But many people believe it is the fault of teachers [clergymen] *whose teaching is fruitless, because they are sowing among thorns. The apostles built the Christian church through the power of the Holy Spirit, ridding themselves of evil by means of excommunication. However, they did not banish these excommunicated people from the country nor deprive them of their property. But in our day, they want to bring people to faith by using external force, which does not result in improvement or new birth. Like their Teacher* [Christ], *true Christians are not to persecute others, but be willing to suffer persecution. How can we know when it is daylight, unless night and darkness set in? And if such persecution in Christ's name does not occur, how can Scripture be fulfilled?*

"After these words, the speaker recounted the suffering of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Amos, Micah, and Zechariah, that of God's son (Jesus), John the Baptist, James, and many saints.

"Felix Manz, Falk, Reimann, Konrad Winkler, Joerg Karpsis, and Hanz Herzog were drowned in Zurich. Blaurock, Eberle, and Kruesi were burned. In the surrounding countries, many others were beaten and killed with the sword. But the Christian's lot is persecution and so he rejoices in it. When this occurs, the holy city descends from heaven and invites the bride of the Lamb to the nuptial communion service. 'And so we also want to pick up our walking staff, and as we do so, God will guide us along the right path.' In this life there is nothing but tribulation, misery, fear, and suffering. He is fortunate who can die with Him and say, 'Into Your hands, Lord, I commit my spirit. Amen.'

"In the closing prayer, which the preacher read from the prayer book (of 1691), the following passages occur: 'We come before You, confess our sins and ask You in the name of Jesus, Your son, to have mercy on us. Have mercy on us, our God, have mercy on us. If there is still something in us that displeases You and is hidden to us, help us recognize it and give us a heart to gladly accept it. May You also be gracious and merciful to all those who hate, persecute, and harm You and us. Oh Lord, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Lay no guilt to their account with respect to us.'

"After the preacher had finished, women inside were seen weeping, embracing, and kissing each other; the men, serious and determined, looked straight ahead. Uli Steiner also felt a tear in his eye and turned to go home. He knew that he had lost his wife.

"On April 17, 1693, a serious, quiet group took to the road from Langnau toward Zollbrueck. Men and women were heavily loaded with baskets and chests. A

few wept and looked back now and then, others gave the impression of quiet, serious determination, others again looked ahead enraptured and with smiling face.

"Salzburg has seen such emigrations as have France and the Savoy. Our free fatherland saw them as well, and not just from Emmental. At that time, there were many forced emigrations, especially those of Mennonites from Schwarzenberg and Oberland.

"In the Obermatt, a copse offers cooling shade. There the road turns from the valley of Ilsis into the valley of Emme. Here one gets the last view of the hills and mountains of the homeland. Here the burdens are laid down and, after a brief rest, the elder strikes up a farewell song supposed to have originated with Joerg Blaurock. Following are the final verses:

I cannot trust in the flesh,
It is too weak by nature:
I want to trust Your Word
To be my comfort and refuge
On which I depend.
It will, out of all distresses,
Help me get to Your rest.

I heartily beseech You,
Before all our enemies,
Many though they be.
Be pleased, oh Lord, on moral grounds,
Not to lay their iniquity to their account.
Let it be according to Your will;
This my plea, oh God!

Thus I want to depart
Together with my fellow travelers.
May God graciously lead us
Into His kingdom.
Walking by faith, nothing doubting,
Completing His holy work,
May He give us strength to the end.

"A group of boys stood at a respectable distance watching the Anabaptists reshoulder their burdens and take the road northward. Then those who had accompanied them returned to Langnau. Somewhat later, Uli Steiner was also seen returning. He had been hiding behind a hedge to watch his wife depart.

"In Langnau, that event was much spoken about. Everywhere people stood together in conversation. The people of Emmental were not accustomed to expressing their feelings and becoming emotional; but listening to conversations and opinions, revealed differences among people. With the feeling that a wrong has occurred, one seeks to offset it by attributing as much guilt as possible to the suffering individuals. Rumors flew about that these people were secretly plotting crimes, rumors of indecencies at their night-time gatherings. Then the concept of superstition came into play. These people might be in a position to cast a spell on the cattle in the barn and the grain on the field.

"One also encountered that evil, nationalistic spirit to whom an execution brings welcome excitement. One feels oneself enveloped in an aura of self-righteousness, as one who has obeyed the law. From the standpoint of the successful citizen, one looks down on the dregs of humanity, the riffraff, those useless to the country, who, as far as many are concerned, can see to finding their own accommodation. It's the common attitude, which is fond of following the non-resistant person with a stone or at least a contemptible joke.

"A few had loud praise for the action of the government; others sympathized with the outcasts, as poor, beguiled victims of their own misguided fantasy. But far stronger than all these concepts was a quiet fury at the action of the authorities and sympathy for the banished persons. There was an overwhelming feeling that the banished people were their own flesh and blood, which the government, pastors, governors, and 'gracious lords' were not."

These persecuted people usually went to the Palatinate or the Alsace.

§88 3. **About the history of the persecutions some two decades later** (1710); (freely transcribed from D.K. Cassel).

"In Switzerland, the persecution and attitude of intolerance of the Calvinists against the Mennonites lasted half a century [end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century]. *Many were induced to seek a home in a distant land. Others, who had immigrated to the Alsace and the Palatinate earlier, were, by the terrors of the 1690 war, moved to seek a home in what was described as paradise: namely, America. At the time, the Amsterdam treasury 'for foreign needs' granted assistance. — Around 1710, the prisons in Berne were again overfilled with unhappy Anabaptists. — The council in Berne could still not agree by what means they should be punished; that is why they were imprisoned so much longer. Since the council could not come to an agreement about whether or not to kill them, they finally decided to 'expel them from the country and transport them as prisoners to Pennsylvania.' — They were taken down the Rhine in a ship accompanied by an officer with soldiers. — In Nimwegen, Holland, the local Mennonite minister received them in a most friendly way. Through the advocacy of the Amsterdam Mennonites,*

the officer was prohibited from transporting his prisoners farther through Dutch territory, and the prisoners were released. They turned back and settled in the Palatinate. Some went to what at the time was Prussian Lithuania, but most of them soon moved from there to Holland and then almost all of them went to America, including most of those from the Palatinate [cf. Part I, §22, f, 'Dutch Mennonites' and how they represented the persecuted people before the government of the Netherlands and, through the latter, before the persecuting governments of Switzerland, the Palatinate, etc.].

§89 4. **About the life of the Swiss Mennonites** in the first half of the 19th century; (by the well-known Swiss philanthropist, Heinrich Tschocke, who visited the Swiss Mennonites in the Basel region during his wanderings some 70–80 years ago, according to D.K. Cassel).

"More than one hundred families of Anabaptists reside here. They live scattered on isolated farms or 'feudal land' in valleys and on mountains, making the most barren areas fruitful by hard work. They are a strong breed of a most beautiful bloodline, innocent, peace-loving, conscientious, and benevolent. All their neighbors love them. Catholics and Protestants of the surrounding area trust them more than they trust each other. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Berne government (Calvinist Church and state) drove these upright people from their homes, because they refused to swear oaths and bear arms. The [Catholic] *ruling bishops of Basel, who were wiser and more tolerant than that Protestant government, received the outcast disciples of Menno on their, at the time, worldly property. I stayed with the Anabaptists in the quiet Tischeiwo mountain valley, at the Solothurn borders, in the Champot forest and in other friendly, barren wastes. Among them, I felt as though I lived in the early, lowly periods of holy primitive Christianity. So cheerful, so God-fearing, no moping, hospitable and hard-working, they live in patriarchal simplicity and piety, with no drunkards, gamblers, nocturnal dreamers, liars,*[141] *jealous neighbors among them. Should a quarrel or dispute arise among them, which rarely happens, one of their elders kindly settles it. They assist free of charge at work with haying, grain harvesting, and wherever there is a need. Moderation and moral purity help them preserve good health and live vigorously to a great, vibrant old age. A senior, more than seventy years old, one of their teachers (they have no pastors), vigorously led me to the other families over hill and dale like a young man in the prime of life. What genuine love of married couples, what tenderness among brothers and sisters, what attentiveness of the children toward their parents I saw there! Their entire doctrine on upbringing is simply based on the example of the adults for the younger ones, and that by the words: 'Keep God in view!' In spite of that, they enjoy an upbringing that is often nobler than the finest of the world at large.*

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[141] Persecution purifies the churches!

"What a people, what Christianity, which needs no lawyers, no pastors, no judges, indeed scarcely any doctors!

"On Sundays, they gather alternately now at one teacher's place, now at another's, to hold a worship service in the open air, in a barn, or a larger room. The teacher speaks as his mood or the needs of his listeners may dictate or he reads from an old book of sermons. He performs baptisms, conducts communion services, confirms marriages, and farms like everyone else. Baptism usually directly precedes the first communion, often the wedding of a loving couple. Incidentally, I must admit that their books of sermons, prayers, and songs, including martyr songs, are antiquated and hence rather tasteless.

"After the worship service, the families from nearby farms act as hosts to those living farther away free of charge. At other times, the former receive brotherly invitations from the latter.

"Like their modest dwellings, their utensils and clothing are clean, but without jewelry. As every denomination in the Christian world, the Anabaptists also have their pious fancies and peculiarities. For married men to grow a beard, the masculine sign of distinction, would not be so bad if the clothing style were medieval or oriental and Old Testament, as the names of their beautiful daughters. But the grey, short coat, the short trousers, and the socks drawn over the knee are not in harmony with the majesty of the beard. Buttons on clothing are prohibited; they are replaced by lace and hook. The women dress just as simply. No gold, no velvet, no silk is permitted, not even a brightly-colored silk band is allowed to flutter around the girl's straw hat. In spite of those limitations, the girls are always adept at finding ways and means with respect to beauty without putting their religion at risk. What a sight for sore eyes, when those slim, blooming female mountain dwellers jauntily don the hat, around which the tender bows of wickerwork and flowers modeled in straw waft and nod; and everything so modest."

In this connection, Cassel remarks that "the picture may be drawn true to nature, but single traits may lack correct emphasis."

§90 5. **Description of the Mennonites in Switzerland around 1850 by an "Insider"** (according to D.K. Cassel).

"The occupation of our fathers in Switzerland was mainly land cultivation and stock-breeding, although nearly everybody carried on a trade on the side to earn something during the long winter. Snowfall on the mountains is heavy indeed, covering all fences. No one works in field and forest. Although there were cabinet-makers, lathe workers, and leather and wooden shoemakers, most of them were weavers and that was the main winter occupation at the time of our fathers.

"Flax yielded well, so the women spun a long, long yarn. In the narrow mountain valleys, the winter evenings were long because, during the shortest days of the year, there is sunshine for only a few hours, indeed in single places there is no sun-

shine for sixteen to eighteen weeks. There, by the light of the 'Kienspan,' the hum of spinning wheels and the buzz of weavers' shuttles were heard late into the night. Because of much snow piling up in winter, house and barn were under one roof. They were partly wooden buildings with 'wound' clay walls, a mixture of clay and straw wound around logs driven between the uprights. They frequently constructed their dwellings of rough limestone plastered outside and inside. They hewed their shingles by hatchet and covered them with stone slabs on the roof to prevent the wind from blowing them off.

"Although stock-breeding was part of their occupation, most of them could not keep many cattle, possibly a cow and several goats or a goat and a few cows, depending on the financial circumstances. The richer people kept a horse for haying. They often hitched the cow beside the horse for plowing. That always required two men, a plowman and a driver, and four to six persons followed the plow with hoes to work the furrows. [!] *Their plows resembled the old-fashioned prairie plows in this country, with a 'two-wheeler' under the plow beam for depth control. They drew the plow back and forth on the hillside, turning all furrows downhill. The soil, plowed loose from the bottom furrow, had to be transported up the mountain to fill the last furrow. Usually it was carried up.*

"Very little wheat was grown, because it does not ripen at the higher elevations. Of the other grain types, they grew some spelt, but mostly oats and barley, including vetch. These three, mixed, ground, and baked, provided the bread for the mountain dwellers. It was black and heavy, but, possibly in greater measure than the bread from the finest white flour, had the components, which provide the body with health and stamina. Their main produce, however, was the potato, which has found its way from America to the remotest mountain regions of Europe.

"All field work, such as haying and harvesting, was done with simple hand tools, with scythe, hand rake, and sickle, and threshing with flail. Men and women worked from four o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night, when it was urgent to complete the harvest.

"Their food was extremely simple and not of great variety. Even though we would call it a very humble diet, it might not have been so, at least when there was enough of it. It consisted of the already mentioned black bread and potatoes, milk, vegetables, and some meat, which was served very seldom, mainly on Sundays and holidays. The family usually slaughtered only one or two hogs for their own use. Hence many considered meat a rare delicacy, which, when it did get on the table, was apportioned piece-meal for each person by the father.

"The table setting was far from expensive. They boiled the potatoes unpeeled and put them on the table, then added a pot of milk or soup. Everyone was given a long 'sack knife' used for cutting bread at the table, providing the father had not already cut the pieces to size. In addition, every partner at the table got a large, round spoon — now help yourself!

"There were always so-called 'distinguished' people, who were more extravagant. But butter and molasses [preserves] *did not clutter the table of our ancestors, nor did they ruin their stomachs with all kinds of unnecessary sweets. They carried the good articles such as butter to the* [market] *village and spent the proceeds on indispensable items and the annual rent. As a rule, that person was considered fortunate who was able to support his family properly and pay the dues. A few made a good livelihood and put away a small capital for old age. But there also were many who had to appeal to the church for assistance.*

"Need forced them to become habitually hard-working and thrifty. Lavish vanities were not habitual with them, but they knew how to rejoice and indulge in pleasures. At work, there were always many of both sexes together. At the time, women did not consider it beneath their dignity to assist in fieldwork. Once the main jobs were completed, they held their celebrations, when they entertained themselves with lively gaiety. The celebration after harvest they called 'sicklefest,' that after threshing 'flailfest,' etc. For these occasions, they prepared doughnuts and other deep-fried cakes, baked oblong rolls or went to the valley to get white bread from the baker and a measure (about two pints) of wine from the 'tin mug host,' depending on whether the farmer had 'coin' at his disposal. In fall, there were 'flax-breaking fests,' when young men and young ladies gathered. On such occasions, they were allowed to joke with each other and hug each other. In fall, they also staged a market day[142] *in almost every village or town, to which the young people looked forward with anticipation long in advance, because that is when they could buy something with their savings. Seniors took a cow, horse, sheep or hog, or some of their handicraft to the market to look for a buyer.*

"There, everything conceivable was up for sale and presented in most beautiful language by authentic Jews and Jews with Christian names. Once a purchase was made, a prolonged dispute over who would pay for the wine ensued. To attend the 'Marit' (fun-fair) and not drink wine would be rather strange. To spend a few creutzer for gingerbread and a glass of wine was a great delight for the young people. At the fun-fair every young lady expected that he — she certainly knew who — would take her to the inn, drink a glass of wine (half a litre) with her and sing a ditty. That was the custom of the country. Perhaps it was also conformity to the world? That did not enter their minds. In other respects, they lived separated from the world. In dress, they loved plainness. By enforcing church rules, they resisted all innovations, because these satisfy material inclinations alone.

"Mirrors were seldom used. The moustache, considered to be an excrescence of the devil, was artfully concealed by the seniors without shaving it off, [?] *and the young ladies of those days knew how to arrange things without extensive use of the mirror and yet please the bachelors. Our ancestors harbored a religious scruple to-*

142 Compare with the annual fair in South Russia.

ward the mirror. Once I heard my mother, in conversation with a friend, say, 'Indeed, the ancients did not say in vain: Look not into the mirror; the devil lurks behind it.' That seemed dubious to me, that the devil should be in the mirror.

"Our forefathers practiced strict discipline in the matter of external appearance and often became so one-sided that they failed to notice how the devil broke through bridle and defense in other respects.

"I have not seen a church building or meetinghouse among the Mennonites in Switzerland, and there are none even today [today, possibly 1910]. *They gathered alternately, now here, now there, in dwellings. Each church usually had two ministers and their worship services were very simple. They usually read two chapters from the Bible, dealt with section-by-section, and compared them with other passages of Scripture or explained* [it?]. *They made it a practice to preach only God's Word, not their own words. But those who were no thinkers often quoted passage after passage out of context, with the result that the listeners sometimes made fun of the muddle, thus taking the name and Word of God on their lips light-heartedly.*

"Our forefathers sang only in unison. At the time of our parents, they began two-voice and harmony singing of the psalms of David, arranged in verse form by Lobwasser and set to music by Johann Ulrich Schulzberger, music director in Berne. This was by command of the government and by its most gracious 'privileges.' Like the churches of the Reformed state church, they sang Christian songs using lively folk tunes; the old people could not reconcile such singing with Christianity at all. John Wesley was the first to introduce them into the churches with the remark that they should not leave the beautiful to the devil.

"At that time, participation in missions by our forefathers was insignificant indeed. Only in one church did the elder, receiver of alms, collect missions donations after the sermon. He read out receipts of moneys sent to a missions society earlier, distributed tracts, etc. Then someone raised an objection to the effect that there were enough heathen at home; we should evangelize them and not send any money away. To this, the old white-haired warrior for God's cause replied: 'These heathen have God's Word, if they refuse to accept it, we cannot force them. It is not God's will that anyone be forced.'

"At that time, the devil was supposed to dwell preferably in the mirror, but it seems that, by the iron grip of miserliness and greed, he again succeeded in killing the awakening interest in missions. The collection of donations for missions was later discontinued.

"Incidentally, they lived under circumstances which were less conducive to missions activity than those here [in America]. *They still lived in recollection of the difficult times of persecution and even then had no civil and religious rights, but were only tolerated. Hence, they took great care to live very quietly and withdrawn, so that the religious movements of the time affected them very little. Besides, on the wild*

mountains, they found it difficult to put aside gifts for missions." [Thus far the "insider."]

§91 6. **Emigration, Voyage to America, and Settlement in the Primeval Forests of Ohio at the Beginning of the 19th Century** (according to D.K. Cassel).

"When, before the persecution, our ancestors withdrew to the wild mountains, they still had room to develop, even though arduously and slowly. As the number of families increased with time, some had difficulty finding accommodation. According to the promise made to the government, they could not buy land, even if they had had the means to do so. The leasing cost on the feudal estates was rising, added to which they had many other contributions and taxes with which to contend. It was becoming almost impossible for the poor man to support a large family on the rugged heights under feudal tenure. Such were the circumstances that prepared the people for a decision, the magnitude of which we can scarcely estimate considering our present means of travel.

"The first decisive instigation to emigrate at the time of our parents was the so-called difficult time around 1815 to 1818. That was real famine affecting our people. Seniors often tell of the shortage of food at mealtime, especially among the poorer class, who had nothing in store from earlier years. Instead of the usual bread, they had only bran cakes. Stems, leaves, and roots were gathered and eaten, which caused much sickness.

"The first to immigrate to America in that difficult period were Benedict Schrag and family from the Basel canton or Basel land. Travelling with them was a young lad, Hans Burkholder. Schrag settled in Green Township, Wayne County, OH, and sent a long letter to Switzerland, in which he highly lauded the advantages of his new homeland. This rosy picture aroused the interest in emigration in the French-speaking Jura, in the Sonnenberg church and surrounding area. The first from there to decide likewise to seek a new homeland in distant America were Peter Lehman, Isaac Sommer (grandfather of the present editor of the Bundesbote*), Ulrich Lehman, and David Kilchhofer. The last even composed a song describing the pitiful state of the poor people and showing why he wanted to emigrate. Following are the approximate words of the first verse:*

Here in Switzerland,
As known to everyone,
Much complaint is heard,
Because so many are poor,
There is never a time
To gather the hay.

"The company began the trip in April 1819. After a long drive through France, they arrived in Le Havre, where they embarked. They landed in New York after forty-seven days, via Philadelphia, Lancaster, Pittsburgh, and Canton, and came to within four miles of Wooster, Wayne County, OH, where they lived together in a schoolhouse for a month. From there, they investigated the surrounding area for a suitable place to settle. After a lengthy search, they decided to settle where the center of the Sonnenberg church is presently located. Here they lived lonely lives, far from all relatives and acquaintances. They were surrounded by a great wilderness, where only an isolated backwoodsman existed here and there, whose language and customs were strange to them. Difficult though life was at the beginning, they soon realized that here work was much more productive than on the wild mountains in Switzerland. Besides, they soon breathed the pure air of American freedom and valued as a precious possession the fact that here no intolerant ecclesiastical and government powers restrict a person in his religious convictions. So, they sent friends and relatives in Switzerland a detailed report, praising the advantages of America, that here land could be purchased cheaply, etc. Because of this report, seven more families and some single persons decided to seek their fortune in the new world. They made the trip in the year 1821. Hans Lehman (elder) was one of the company. [The reader is reminded that especially concerned here is only immigration to Ohio.]

"For the first four pioneer families, the two previous years had passed slowly at times, the more so because there was no teacher (preacher) among them and they had to do without public worship services. Therefore, the small settlement rejoiced greatly at the arrival of this small company of travelers. They had waited longingly for the arrival of their beloved brothers and sisters, so now tears of joy flowed freely as they welcomed them into their rough log huts. They greatly anticipate the happy prospect of founding a church and meetinghouse for worship services.

"In 1822, three more families followed and in 1824, even sixteen families and single persons. In the years 1825, 1828, and 1835, a number of families came, some of them from the Alsace. The believers who came from the Alsace (Swiss by descent and language) formed the Chippeway Church in 1825 and the Putnam Church in 1835. The settlement in Indiana, with Berne as center at present, began somewhere around 1838.

"Most of us consider a trip to or from Switzerland, even in this age of steam, as no insignificant undertaking. But let us see what traveling was like sixty or sixty-five [now eighty to eighty-five] *years ago.*

"Once the decision to 'travel to America' was made, our fathers had to look for a horse and wagon first of all. Whoever could not otherwise get hold of the money to finance the purchase of those and the sea voyage, sought to borrow it. Often two or more families bought a vehicle jointly. A chest of clothing, a chest of food, and bedding was about all that was loaded, and then the last words of farewell were spoken: 'Alps, shepherds, brethren, farewell!' From the last elevation, they may, with tear-

filled eyes, have looked back on the mountains of home, and then taken the road down the valley with vigorous step toward the new home. The driver, as well as those old enough to walk, accompanied the small wagon on foot. That is how they traveled a distance of some five hundred [English] *miles, past Paris, across France to Le Havre by the sea. There the horse was unhitched and had to be sold, but the wagon and load were taken along on the sailing ship to cross the wide ocean.*

"The stay in Le Havre lasted several weeks for some, but finally, they took off on the gruesome waters, whose very prospect filled them with frightful vibrations. As a result, the ingested potato soup insisted on roughly progressing in reverse order, almost as if it preferred to be buried in the far seas. On the sailing ship, the pitching and tossing as a rule had to be endured seven to eight weeks. Hence, the immigrants most longingly turned their eyes toward the western horizon, where the new world was to appear. Finally, the shout of joy resounded, 'Land!' along with fervent reverberation in the hearts of the travel-weary wanderers: 'Praise God, the rolling is over!'

"The reader may recall that the first four immigrating families landed in New York. Of those following, some landed on the American coast near Alexandria in Virginia. Their destination, however, was the same and the means of getting there no different. At both landing sites, they were still some five hundred miles [seven hundred versts] *from their destination, and in those days railways were nonexistent. So, the wagon and meager belongings were put on shore, a horse was bought again, and the road taken in the direction of the* [at the time so-called] *'distant west,' into the Ohio wilderness. That was a most laborious trip, leading through inhospitable regions on bad roads. There were mountains to cross and rivers to ford; bridges and rivers to cross, since ferries were completely lacking. Meeting up with danger was unavoidable. On one occasion, one of the wagons encountered deep water and the chests began to float away. Mother and child cried out in fear. The father leaped into the water to keep the wagon from overturning, and lost his pocket watch in the act. They emerged safely, however, and because the water was bright and clear, 'Uncle Hans' later retrieved the watch.*

"In individual cases, where the means for travel were lacking, the people remained for a time with believers who had immigrated earlier to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia as well as in Lancaster County, PA. They were received and supported in a brotherly way. Those who did continue also found many friendly and charitable people among the Americans along the way, who gave them food and sometimes even money. The progressive 'Yankees' found their strange-looking wagons and other equipment quite funny. As one of the traveling companies passed through a town in Pennsylvania, a man offered the driver of the foremost wagon a new, shiny harness in exchange for the old one he had brought along from Switzerland. But the driver thought the American intended to show him up as a fool and drove on. With arrival of the next wagon, the offer was renewed. The owner immediately agreed to

the exchange and received a better, more comfortable harness. Of course, the first driver regretted having been so distrustful.

"Thus, after varied experiences and five to six months of traveling, the 'Promised Land' of the primeval forests of Ohio was finally reached. Although not everyone was immediately pleased, the rest set about with hopeful courage establishing a new home for themselves. Those who had brought some cash with them, purchased land from the American pioneers where a hut had already been built and a piece cleared. Others again, who brought no money along and even had traveling debts, moved into the virgin primeval forest[143] where land was still cheaper. There stood the mighty oak and beach, chestnut, hickory, and sugar trees, which had to be felled by axe and cleared away before there could be any thought of soil cultivation. First, a building site was selected and cleared on the land chosen as home. Then they cut tree trunks into 'bucks' ('Boecken') of equal length and, on a certain day, the neighbors came and assisted in 'blocking them up.' With sunset, on the evening after a happy day's work, the new blockhouse stood complete, and the owner viewed it with pleasure. Of course, there was still much work to do before moving in. The roof had to be constructed of rough, split staves and weighed down with poles ('Windpfaehlen'); the door and windows had to be cut out with saw or axe; a heater used for both cooking and heating had to be designed; at that time there were no iron stoves in the far west.

As soon as they furnished their dwelling, rough and ready as it was, the family moved in and began clearing the forest. They kept the best tree trunks to make planks for fences; the rest were chopped up and burnt. As soon as a 'Klarig' full of such material ('Bloecke') had accumulated, the neighbors were called together on a certain day to 'roll' or pile it up to be burnt. In the beginning, the settlers occupied themselves with this hard work for weeks on end. In so doing, they were sometimes divided into two sections and the terrain divided into two even halves. Then it was a matter of who could finish first. That brought great effort into play, for which the inherited Swiss strength stood them in good stead. For such work, genuine spirits were used for 'strengthening,' a beverage which in time was found in every hut in the settlements. At times, the people were admittedly 'cheered up' somewhat, but they were always careful not to get drunk.

"When the mild spring breezes began to blow, one could see in the dark of night, campfires burning in numerous clearings throughout the settlements, crackling on the log piles of a peace-loving army. Long before the fires were all extinguished, the settlers began plowing the ground, no easy job with the many stumps. As a rule, they hitched a pair of oxen up as draft animals. They slowly turned the field over, furrow after furrow, and the crashing of roots was a warning to guard one's shins. One can readily imagine that, in addition to this arduous work, the pioneers of our settlements also had to endure difficult privations. They were always able to satisfy

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[143] Our Russians all settled on the prairies (steppes).

their hunger; food was obtainable for work, but in the beginning they had to make do with potatoes and unground maize. At that time, grist mills were in short supply, the nearest twenty to thirty miles away. The roads were in such bad shape that a trip to a mill meant being absent for three days. That was precious time, so making the corn edible by one's own means was an alternative.

"However, the greatest privations were soon overcome. With diligent hand, the housewives dug over a piece of the virgin soil for gardening and grew vegetables. They raised hogs, which fed on acorns and hickory nuts in the woods in fall, and soon supplied meat in abundance. Nor did it take long for the settlements to be provided with milk, for each settler sought to acquire a few cows as soon as possible. The cows found their feed in the forests, but they often wandered off far into the wilderness and the settlers had to search for them for miles. That often meant walking barefooted over hill and dale, following the distant sound of cowbells into unfamiliar territory, at times troubled by the sad thought of losing one's way or being bitten by a rattlesnake hidden in foliage and brush.

"The biggest problem in the initial years after immigration was the shortage of clothing. The privations they endured in this respect were more severe than those relative to food, for the suits brought along from Switzerland wore out only too quickly with the rough work. Often they were almost at their wit's end, especially in larger families.

"There was no market for the leftover products, because there was no trading town situated within one hundred miles. In those days, the price of wheat was twenty-five cents per bushel, whereas they had to pay fifty cents for a yard of muslin and proportionately for everything else.

"In those days, money was astonishingly rare. In the oldest settlement of ours, not enough of it was available to pay for the postage on a letter to Switzerland. But our fathers had enterprising spirit, so one of them walked fifteen miles to an older settlement of Amish brethren to borrow a quarter for postage.

"Under such circumstances, there was no thought of buying material for new clothing, but, in this as in other things, they sought to make their own fabric as soon as possible. They raised sheep and planted flax, and every housewife spun yarn of wool and linen, which the fathers wove into cloth on native looms. In those days, the girls and young women wore coarse linen skirts dyed yellow[144] or black with tree bark, and the boys walked about in 'tow trousers.'

"They wore homemade clogs to work in field and forest or to the worship services, indeed even to weddings. Soon leather shoes were available. By contrast, high boots were for long considered an offensive luxury article. They wove their summer hats out of straw and knitted their winter caps with white wool.

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144 Cf. Part I, Settlement in Russia, "Old Colony" and "Molotschna."

"The settlers made the most of their own household goods and farm equipment. They built their own wagons, making the wheels off the ends of thick tree trunks. Sawmills did not yet exist and planks and floorboards (needed for similar work and for the erection of buildings) were made with hand tools. At that time, giving the 'native industry' a boost was not dependent on protective tariffs.

"Our fathers continued worship services in the new settlements in the same manner practiced in Switzerland. They gathered on Sundays now in this home, now in that one, and the teachers or 'servants' presented the Word of God in simple fashion. Later, however, they built meetinghouses or parish halls in which worship or 'church' services were held. They introduced the same book of psalms that they had used in Switzerland for use in worship services in their new settlements. This was later replaced with the 'Impartial Songbook,' which is still in use in some churches.

"A 'business session' always preceded the communion service celebrated every spring at Easter. Its purpose was to make plans for eliminating all sorts of disturbances in church life and to set up regulations. They had resolved to erect strong barriers in order to counter the tendency to conform to the world; and for that reason, the regulations almost exclusively concerned the cut and color of dress and the like. With time, many differences of opinion arose concerning the expediency of those regulations. Some churches are still sorting this out.

"In the initial years after settlement, the young people had little opportunity to gather general knowledge. The older children of most settlers enjoyed only brief school instructions, if they received any at all. Generally, the parents taught them to read and write. If many achieved only a rudimentary education, they had at least reached a basic level, from which, in the course of time, the diligent person could build upon. Many a person has in fact worked his way up to a very comprehensive body of knowledge.

"(Much of what I have just reported is taken from the notes of one who grew up at that time and had only six days of school instruction.)

"In time, however, German instruction in reading and writing was provided almost everywhere. They usually considered higher courses of instruction unnecessary or even harmful, worldly wisdom. Some have maintained this view to the present, while others approve of a thorough school education, because they are persuaded that the needs of this time demand a more comprehensive knowledge than what our fathers, subject to their privations, were able to acquire.

"More than fifty-five years have passed [around 1890] *since the foundation was laid for the building of our churches,*[145] *and if you, dear reader, should walk through the expanded settlements of our people, you would possibly look in vain for a trace of the conditions of those days. Diligent hands have transformed the former wilderness into a flourishing region covered with stately houses and barns, whose*

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[145] Of the immigrants to Ohio in the first half of the 19th century.

owners enjoy all of life's comforts. Only the frail forms of single still-living grand- and great-grandparents remind us of the tribulations of long gone days. The last of these will possibly enter their longed-for rest in a few years, since the time of their birth takes us back to the beginning of this [19th] *and, with some, to the preceding century. Already overarching the mortal remains of an upright generation are numerous grave mounds in graveyards. May a grateful posterity, in loving memory, always recall the fact that hardships and privations rest beneath them, the fruits of which we will henceforth enjoy.*

Bethel, MO
A. J. M.

§92 7. **Severe Trials and Suffering of the Mennonites in Virginia during the Civil War** (freely transcribed from D.K. Cassel).

In the year 1860, when the Civil War broke out, the Mennonites, as the anti-slavery party, suffered rather severely. The southern states, which had separated from the Union (the United States) and formed their own alliance, the so-called "Confederation," fought the war in order to keep slavery. Virginia was one of those southern states. — Many of the strictest secessionists (keepers of slaves) insulted the non-resistant, anti-slavery churches in a most vulgar fashion. Remarkably, the higher officers and persons, who were personally better acquainted with the "non-resistant" Mennonites, saw them as religious, decent, and honest people.

In May 1861, during a military recruitment, a number of Mennonites and Dunkers or "brethren" and their sons over eighteen years of age were recruited. Although they were forced to join the army, they could not be induced to fire a musket, not even under the severest of threats. They were released "because they were only a hindrance."

In July 1861, all militarily-able men between eighteen and forty-five years old were called up. Many members of the non-resistant churches and their sons fled to the mountains and hid there. Others left for the northern states (which were opposed to slavery). In September 1861, seventy men tried to flee to the northern states, but they were arrested by the confederate outpost near Petersburg, West Virginia, and taken to prison in Richmond. This company consisted of Mennonites and Dunkers. The authorities imprisoned them for about six weeks. Those were sad days for them, as well as for their loved ones at home. They brought many a hearty prayer before the throne of grace of their dear Savior, who granted them His mercy. — They were threatened with being put before the firing squad, but the hand of the Almighty prevented that. Apparently, the Lord allowed all this to happen to them for a higher purpose. As the Scripture says, "In all things, God works for the good of those who love Him." God answered their prayer at the right time. The Dunkers showed themselves very friendly toward the Mennonites during their imprisonment and the interrogation. — When Algernon S. Gray, a lawyer, brought the Mennonite Con-

fession of Faith into the courtroom in Richmond, Virginia, it was evident that the Dunkers held to exactly the same principles regarding warfare as the Mennonites.

These non-resistant, anti-slavery churches would never have won the precious freedom to remain with their own during the war had these seventy men not been arrested and taken to court, thus revealing their principles to the high officials in the described manner. "How marvelous are the ways of the Lord to protect His own who love Him!"

Some time later the Mennonites presented a legislative project concerning the "non-resistant" churches to the confederate congress. The previously mentioned lawyer, Algernon S. Gray, happened to be a member of the congress, and apparently the Lord directed his tongue when he presented the case and explained it to his colleagues. He showed them a copy of the Mennonite Confession of Faith published by Bishop Peter Burkholder in 1837. He explained that these people were honest and upright in their faith and predominantly hard-working and thrifty farmers, who owned the best land in the Virginia valley. — He said, "Leave them undisturbed on their landed estates and allow them to supply us with the products we need and must have to maintain our army! If we force these non-resistant people to join the army, they will be of no use to us. We have tried it and have seen that they prefer being killed to fighting. But if we leave them on their estates, they will do their duty and produce food in abundance, more than any other class of people would. We need exactly such farmers as they are." — This talk resulted in congress passing a law exempting the Mennonites, Dunkers, Quakers, and Nazarenes from military service on condition that they pay $500 of confederate money into the treasury.

"The non-resistant people willingly accepted this law, and those who had not left [fled] *earlier, remained at home until the war was over."*

XI. Development of Church Life, Missions, Publication Endeavors, and School System of the "Old Mennonites" of North America

§93 1. **The original nature of church life of the Old Mennonites** of North America was essentially portrayed above: their churches (originally log houses) were small and very plain meetinghouses; their "bishops" and "ministers" or "assistants" (also called "dedicated servants" and "servants of the book") were also plain and chosen from among their midst. Everything they had and did conformed as closely as possible to their former life in Switzerland, the Palatinate, etc. They desired nothing else; in fact, they feared everything else. This church system, once achieved by each group in the initial period of settlement in the primeval forest, was a great treasure. Even members of other confessions, such as Lutherans, Reformed, etc., participated in the plain spiritual edification of the Mennonites, often asking their simple spiritual teachers to serve them. Whenever a lively preacher of the gospel (such as Count Zinzendorf or Wesley) of any of the evangelical denominations appeared in the wilderness of the half-cleared primeval forest, the Mennonites eagerly participated. Once the Lutherans, Reformed, and other evangelicals had organized churches with educationally trained clergy close to where the Mennonites had their churches, many Mennonites left to join these confessions or other closely related fellowships such as the Methodists and the Baptists. With their popular and yet appropriately schooled ministers and lively participation in church life by all interested members, these confessions took first place in number and importance in American Protestantism. — Due to dissatisfaction with the monotonous church life in the Mennonite churches, many a division and new formation occurred. We will treat this topic in greater detail below.

§94 2. **A great transformation occurred** in the life of the Mennonite church with the founding of the "**General Conference A**."[146] "Conventions" or meetings of "bishops" and ministers of various churches with regard to mutual understanding and promotion of spiritual life were already held long before. However, little precise information is known about them, because no minutes were kept. — The first known "convention" occurred in the year **1727** (but the place is unknown). Its purpose was to unite the churches more closely. The Mennonite "**Dor-**

[146] This "A" designation has come into use very recently, because a second "General Conference" identified as "B" has arisen.

drecht Confession of Faith" of 1632 was acknowledged, accepted, and signed[147] by the following bishops and servants: Schippach Church: Jakob Godshalk, Heinrich Kolb, Claes Jansen, and Michael Ziegler. — Germantown Church: John Gorgas, John Conrads, and Claes Rittinghausen [-huysen, Rittenhouse]. — Conestoga Church: Hans Burgholder, Christian Herr, Benedict Hirschi, Martin Baer, and Johannes Bowmann. — "Grosser Schwamm" Church: Velti Clemmer. — Manatant Church: Daniel Langenecker, and Jakob Beghtly. — Also known about is a convention in Franconia, Montgomery County, PA, 1760, and one such at the same location in 1777. — Since that time, the **Franconia convention** is supposed to have been held regularly and now convenes semi-annually in May and October.

In the year **1847**, a division occurred in this Franconia Conference. A young minister, **John H. Oberholzer**, and like-minded comrades recognized the cumbersome, monotonous, traditional, although fervent piously intended church life (which in fact comprised much true Christianity) as inadequate and, especially with the given circumstances, not corresponding to what was demanded of the church of Christ. In order to fulfill their call to evangelize, he and like-minded comrades saw other means as requisite for the creation and promotion of true personal Christianity in the churches and in the world. The means they envisioned were Sunday school and overall religious instruction of the young people and their general education in a Christian spirit. They also promoted evangelization, foreign missions, Christian literature, and theological school. — In the previously mentioned year 1847, the Franconia conference relieved Oberholzer of his position as minister. He and his comrades formed their own church and conference. About this, Br. D.K. Cassel, who, as far as we know, does not belong to their conference, reports objectively as follows:

The General Conference [A] of the Mennonites of North America

"The General Conference of the Mennonites of North America was founded on May 28, 1860,[148] at West Point, Lee County, Iowa. During the days preceding founding of this conference, the members of the West Point Church and those of the Zion Church, a few miles distant, celebrated a joint missions festival, to which breth-

147 According to D.K. Cassel.

148 Which is contradicted by the fact that the "General Conference A" celebrated its 50th anniversary (jubilee) September 3–9, 1908. So, we must accept the latter date as decisive. Very interesting is the fact that the period during which this conference was founded (1857–1860), coincides with the origin of the M.B. Church in Russia.

ren from eastern Pennsylvania were invited. In response to this invitation, the brethren, Minister John H. Oberholzer and Minister Enos Loux, traveled to Iowa and participated in these celebrations; attending besides these were a number of brethren from other Iowa churches.

"At the close of the missions festival, the brethren in attendance decided to meet for a convention on the following day, so as to continue discussing the topic of missions, a cause which the Mennonites of our country had until then almost totally ignored. Accordingly, a meeting convened on the following morning (May 28). After an introductory worship service, the convention was organized by the election of Minister John H. Oberholzer as chairman and Christian Schowalter from Iowa as secretary.

"The convention lasted two days and the main points of consultation concerned how to find the ways and means to increasingly unite the Mennonites of our country, so that the work of missions could be carried on more successfully. Penetrating this meeting was an encouraging measure of unity and love. After a thorough discussion, they passed a series of resolutions in order to work toward the goal in view. In a second session of the conference, held in Wadsworth, OH, May 20–23, 1861, and at which a larger number of churches were represented, these resolutions were once more presented, considered, revised, and then accepted as the foundation of the "General Mennonite Conference of North America." They likewise decided at this session to bring into being, as soon as possible, a theological institution for the training of teachers and ministers, and that Minister Daniel Hege of Summerfield, IL, should travel through the churches and collect contributions for the establishment of such an institution.

"The third meeting of the conference was held in Summerfield, IL, October 19–25, 1863. At these sessions, the plan for founding a Christian educational institution was completed, and erection of a building for this purpose was begun the following year in Wadsworth, Medina County, OH. The completed building was solemnly dedicated to the service of the Lord, October 13–14, 1866, and soon thereafter a school was opened there with Minister Christian Schowalter of Lee County, Iowa, as principal; later C.J. van der Smissen of Friedrichstadt, Schleswig-Holstein, Europe, was appointed as instructor of theology. He later headed the institution as principal and professor of theology. (He was born in Altona, Holstein province, Germany, in 1811 and served as minister since 1837. He died on May 29, 1890, and was buried in the cemetery of the Salem Mennonite Church in Ohio, where he had served as minister for the last ten years. S.F. Sprunger gave the funeral oration.)

"The institution was blessed for a while; its graduates occupy prominent and fruitful positions in the churches. Later, the number of students decreased, and the institution lacked the support needed to continue, so they had to close it and sell the

buildings. [In its place, they later founded the Bethel and Bluffton colleges.]

"At this time, the General Conference, now meeting in session every three years, founded a mission among the Arapahoe and Cheyenne Indians in the Indian territory. This mission comprises two boarding schools, one at Darlington and the other at Cantonment, Sunday schools for the Indian children, and worship services for the adult Indians. Its annual expenditures amount to $4,000 to $5,000 [1890].

"In addition to the mission work among the Indians, the General Conference carries on home missions. After a long search, it has now [1890] *found a permanent itinerant preacher and engaged him for three years. It is his vocation to preach the gospel and to visit the various churches belonging to the General Conference and such other churches and members of our fellowship deemed appropriate by the Board for Home Missions. Moreover, the conference is occupied with endeavors in the area of publication; it has its own publishing house in Berne, IN, and publishes the* Christlicher Bundesbote*, a German weekly, as well as the* Kinderbote*, a semi-monthly German paper for youth and Sunday school.*

"So far, since this conference was founded, new churches have steadily joined it, so that the churches belonging to the conference at present [1890] *number some forty with a membership of almost five thousand persons* [now, 1910, roughly 120 churches with 12,000 members]*."*

Following are the announced names of the ministers of this conference from among the number of "Old Mennonites" or those of Swiss-South German descent around 1890. (We listed the names of the Mennonite ministers of Russian descent belonging to the "General Conference A" above.):

Dakota: C. Miller, Childstown. C. Kaufmann, Childstown. Joseph Gruber, Childstown. — Illinois: J.E. Krehbiel, Summerfield. — Indiana: S.J. Sprunger, Berne. C. Sprunger, Berne. J. Lehman (evangelist), Berne. — Indian territory: D.B. Hirschler. — Iowa: C. Schowalter, Primrose. — Kansas: V. Krehbiel, Christian. W. Gall, Moundridge. C. Krehbiel, Halstead. C. Ramseyer, Hillsboro. J.O. Haschler, Hillsboro. J. Flickinger, Purity. Jacob Stucky, Lake View. I. Stucky, Lake View. Peter Krehbiel, Lake View. H. Banmann, Lehigh. — Missouri: M.S. Moyer, Excelsior. P.P. Lehmann, Tipton. P.S. Lehmann, Elkton. — New York: B. Krehbiel, Clarence Centre. — Ohio: E. Hunsberger, Wadsworth. H. Oberholzer, Poe City. C.J. van der Smissen (North German descent), Hayesville. J. Nyce, Akron. A.A. Sommer, Dalton. — Pennsylvania: A.B. Shelly, Milford Square. J.S. Moyer, Pleasant Valley. S. Moyer, Steinsborg. A.M. Fretz, Redminster. J.H. Oberholzer, Quakertown. L.O. Schimmel, 2114 Franklin St., Philadelphia. N.B. Grubb, 2136

Franklin St., Philadelphia. D. Bergly, Schippach. M. Gottschall, Schwenksville. W.S. Gottschall, Niantic. C.H.A. van der Smissen, Zionsville. S. Ott, Bowmansville. J.B. Baer, Quakertown. A.S. Shelly, Quakertown. (50% of the names of the ministers at the time are Old Mennonite or of Swiss-South German descent and 50% of Russian or West Prussian descent.)

As we know, this "General Conference A" very soon attracted the more progressive **Russian** churches to itself, who provided it with many a new stimulus and new personnel. Greater detail concerning the creations and undertakings of this conference in the area of education, missions, etc., is given below.

§95 3. **"General Conference B" of the Old Mennonites of the more conservative type**.

The churches, which earlier turned away the progressives, such as Oberholzer and comrades mentioned in the preceding section, realized after some time that the old is not all good. They recognized that new means and undertakings are necessary for promoting spiritual life, maintaining and strengthening the churches, and carrying out the Great Commission given to Christ's church. In **1899**, the largest part of the "Old Mennonites" and many "Amish" (see below) in the eastern section of the Union and Canada (Ontario) convened in **Warakusa**, IN. They likewise organized as a "General Conference," which we identify with "B" to distinguish it from the older "General Conference." They formed sixteen conferences, of which the "Lancaster Conference" in Pennsylvania, with over 8,000 members, forms the actual center. Also adhering to it is the "Isaak Peters Fellowship" (known as "Conference of United Mennonite Brethren of North America"). Joining them are a few other Mennonite churches, which have immigrated more recently (in the second half of the 19th century). — They remain **characteristically** conservative and specifically "old Mennonite."

This conference states several conditions for admission to fellowship. First of all, it requires an adherence to the 1632 "Dordrecht Confession of Faith" (it acknowledges that the "Confession in 20 Articles" adhered to by the Isaak Peters Church apparently contains the same doctrines as the "Flemish Confession of Faith"[149] printed in Berdjansk, southern Russia, in 1874). — See "Elucidation of the Confession of Faith of the M.B. Church," 1900/02. The Doctrines concerned are the following: practice of foot-washing in connection with Holy Commun-

[149] "Of the Mennonites in Prussia and Russia."

ion, non-resistance, rejection of government office, condemnation of oath-taking and secret societies, "separation from the world" (especially pronounced plainness in cut of dress), duty of the sisters to wear bonnets of particular form to worship services (according to I Cor. 11). — Similar to "Isaak Peters," this group also practices the new "means." These include Sunday school, evangelization, and higher Bible schools, among others. — This group is the largest of all Mennonite associations in America, and has over 30,000 members in approximately 300 mostly very small churches. — The newest Mennonite historian from its midst, Prof. C. Henry Smith (*The Mennonites of America*), sees this group as containing the actual Mennonites.

Following is a passage from his characterization of these "actual Mennonites" (according to *Mennonitische Blaetter*): *"Today's Mennonites of America are physically and intellectually in direct line descendants of the Anabaptists of the 16th century in Europe. Most of them are able to identify their ancestors back to the first days of the Reformation. Mennonite family names of the present are almost the same as those of the Anabaptists before 1600.* [But where is the '. . . into all the world' . . . 'of all creation'? That is reminiscent of the old covenant nation according to the flesh!][150] *They differ very little from their forebears with respect to faith, doctrine, customs, and attitude toward the world. The main body of Mennonites in America holds to the Anabaptist principles just as strictly as did Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock at the beginning of the 16th century. Moreover, they stood up for complete separation of church and state, and for world peace, from the very beginning. — What must be attributed to the combined effect of three hundred years of various circumstances is the fact that the main part of the American Mennonites have been able to maintain not only the religious principles of their European forebears, but also the language* [?]*, customs and spirit, in a few cases, almost even national costume and style."* — That is how the "Old Mennonites" of this group see themselves.

§96 4. **Various Other Sections of "Old Mennonites" of North America.**

a) The "**Amish**." — This group names itself after a certain Jakob Ammann, a minister of the Mennonites in the Alsace. In 1693, Ammann provoked a division. He wanted to "purify" the group by strictly observing excommunication, style of dress, the growth of beards, etc. (a reform movement entirely in the spirit of the Molotschna "Kleine Gemeinde" at the beginning of the 19th century). His strongest opponent was a certain Minister Hans Reist. — Found among the

[150] Exactly like us Mennonites in Russia!

Swiss-South German Mennonites everywhere in France, the Alsace, Switzerland, the Palatinate, Bavaria, and then in America, there are these two denominations: the (earlier so-called) Reist adherents and the Amish. Many of the latter have joined the other "Old Mennonites" (which the "Amish" consider themselves to be essentially and above all) of the "General Conference B." There are more than one hundred churches with a total number of ca. 15,000 members. The strictest of them, the "Old Amish" (with approx. three thousand members), have nothing to do with all new types and means of the spiritual and church life. They do not even practice the indispensable American Sunday school. (It is indispensable due to America's irreligious, obligatory state elementary school instruction.) According to *Mennonitische Blaetter* (1897, № 4), an article published in the Illinois State newspaper contains a very **congenial description** of their life and activity:

Amish Mennonites

"Extreme plainness in traditional costume and way of life are the outstanding external characteristics of a peculiar religious sect, that of the 'Amish Mennonites.' Its most important colony finds itself in the hilly and mountainous regions of Lancaster County, PA. For a person unacquainted with the customs and habits of these simple but upright people, whose main occupation is farming, a visit to their colonies offers a rich source for economic studies. Next to the Old Mennonites, this sect, widespread mainly in Indiana, is the most numerous Mennonite sect in America. It first appeared in 1693 in the Alsace, where their founder, Ammann (after whom they named themselves), imposed strict separation from adherents of other faiths, foot-washing, greater plainness in dress, and other religious regulations. The children are usually baptized at the age of sixteen or eighteen. Holy Communion is celebrated twice a year, a ceremony, which, in most churches, is preceded by foot-washing. No Mennonite accepts public office, which requires oath-taking and making legal pronouncements; and court disputes are taboo.

"For our visit we choose a Sunday. This is the day that the residents of the neighborhood have gathered in one of the larger farm homes to hold one of their customary 'meetings' or worship services.[151] Parked under the trees of the avenue leading to the farmhouse, as well as in the copse behind the barn, are some sixty to seventy primitive vehicles with canvas tops. So similar in appearance are these vehicles that one is surprised that the owners are able to distinguish one from the other. Meanwhile, a 'knowledgeable person' immediately discovers that these vehicles lack facilities for the lash of a whip. In fact, the Amish Mennonite rarely urges his horse on by hitting, since with him cruelty to animals is a gross sin. Their excellent physique is

[151] Generally, they don't want any special meetinghouses.

proof of the attentive care that the Mennonite farmer provides for his horses. Although they seldom or never get to feel the whip, these animals compete with many a 'professional' racer.

"We find the residents of the surrounding area, who arrived in the sixty to seventy vehicles described above, assembled in the two largest rooms of the farmhouse as well as on the veranda, where the strong sonorous voice of the preacher is also audible. Seated in a row just in front of us is a group of children aged two to six years, who behave quietly and sit without moving. [!] *They appear to listen to the preacher just as attentively as the adults, with the deepest of devotion engraved on their serious faces.* [!] *The picture of this crowd of worshipers in their simple and unostentatious dress impresses every observer profoundly.*

"The reason why the residents of this peculiar colony are almost completely unknown in the merely seventy mile distant Philadelphia is because an Amish farmer shows himself in the city very rarely.

"Let us return, however, to our Sunday meeting! As soon as the preacher has closed the worship service, and while the men proceed into the open to attend to their horses, the women prepare for the fellowship noon meal, without which such a meeting is not complete. Since, however, enough tables and chairs are not available to allow everyone to take in the meal at the same time, the members divide into groups, which sit down at the tables in turn. They begin every meal with a brief, quiet prayer and conclude it in the same manner.

"Thus, these upright residents of Lancaster County, PA, are a model of plainness, thrift, diligence, and honesty in every respect; and one is overcome with a pleasant, agreeable feeling, when one moves about in their simple circles for a few days, far removed from the restless hustle and bustle of the city contaminated by vice, crime, and corruption. How attractive and inviting the appearance of a farmyard, enclosed in a white fence, with its well-filled barns, its cherry and apple trees shading the house, honeysuckle, pipe shrubs, and other creepers climbing up its brick walls, and with the yard's vine-covered arbors, sweet-smelling flowerbeds, and well-kept vegetable gardens. There is an overwhelming sense that these people, in their modest simplicity, are happier and more satisfied than many a city dweller who has millions of riches at his disposal! (H. d. W.)."

b) The "**River Brethren**," are so named because they baptize only in the river. This group was founded in 1776 by a Mennonite minister, Jakob Engel, who proposed the purification of principles and spiritual life, which led to a division. Whether this fellowship considers itself as Mennonite or has any relations whatever with the Mennonites has remained unknown to us. We are also unaware of the number of people who are members of this group.

c) The "**Reformed Mennonite Church**," also called "Herrites" after their founder Jakob Herr. They are supposedly intolerant, prohibiting the very act of listening to any other preacher, etc., and having fellowship with no other church body, including the Mennonites.[152] — They have approximately two thousand members.

d) The "**Apostolic Mennonites**," separate from the Amish, are a very small group with approximately three hundred members, residing mostly in Ohio.

e) The "**Non-Resistant Mennonites**"[153] or "Egly Brethren," likewise named after their founder, place special emphasis on conversion and being born again. They have approximately 1,500 members.

f) The "**United Mennonite Brethren in Christ**," especially numerous in Canada, arose around 1878. They are closest to the Methodists in their theology and have approximately 4,000 members.[154]

In addition to the above, a few smaller groups with some 2,000 members exist. — The purpose of all these new forms was always "purification" of the church and complete recovery of early Christianity, with which the original Mennonite Church had an uninterrupted connection and unity of form and spirit. As evident from many a symptom, the disputes between the "newer" and the "old" do not appear to have been less bitter than was the case in Russia. Fortunately, they resulted in no "persecutions" in America, where the state is indifferent toward all religious divisions. In many cases, the gulf between the new churches and their mother churches appears to be considerably deeper than that between the M.B. Churches and the old "kirchliche" Mennonite Churches. Fortunately, we do not possess the documents relating to the American Mennonite disputes, nor are we responsible for publishing them, as was the case relative to those in Russia.

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[152] This is how some assess them; other writers insist that they have become milder.

[153] Why the name, seeing that all Mennonites in America are "non-resistant"?!

[154] [Editor's note: This group was probably better known at that time as the "Mennonite Brethren in Christ."] A larger fellowship, which calls itself simply "United Brethren in Christ," without claiming the Mennonite name, also exists in North America. It was founded in 1800 by a Mennonite lay preacher, Boehm, and a theologically educated Reformed Minister, Otterbein (hence also called "Otterbeinians"). It is very broad and free dogmatically, but not strictly Anabaptist. It practices foot-washing and with regard to the question of "military service," it is apparently quite "broad"; although Meusel finds them strongly representing the "Anabaptist element."

§97 5. **Schools of the "Old Mennonites."** — Although the Russian Mennonites of North America have a large number of "society schools," "German" elementary schools (in addition to the obligatory state elementary schools), and diverse continuing education schools including the higher college type, the "Old Mennonites" have almost entirely lost[155] their own elementary school. Their children, almost without exception, attend only the English elementary schools; the result is that the number of their churches holding only English worship services is steadily increasing (this includes the churches of the "General Conference A," except for the Russian churches). Higher or continuing education schools are a relatively new phenomenon with them. But now, the "Old Mennonites" also have their own continuing education schools or colleges. Other than "Bethel College," (which is better known to us, and which essentially is maintained by Russian Mennonites of the association of the "General Conference A"), the "**Old Mennonites**" (possibly predominantly "new" Swiss) of the association of this "General Conference A" have a **college in Bluffton**, OH. They have modeled this college after "Bethel College" in Newton.

We must emphasize that the schools dealt with here, as well as those of the Russian Mennonites described above, are not actual institutions of the conferences concerned, but of societies associated with them. Therefore, they exist without being accountable to the conferences, sometimes more closely, other times more distantly, but only with their "goodwill" or "blessing." Initially, the opinion was rife that the "General Conference A" should maintain a higher school (see van der Smissen, above). It was also thought that "Bethel" should be a child of the entire "General Conference A," but that was impossible. They are "school associations" according to the concept brought along by the Russians. As the 1821 "Ohrloff school society" in Russia became the native soil of all such Mennonite associations, it likewise became that directly with all Mennonites of America. The Halstead and then the Newton school, first created according to Ohrloff ideas, became the example for all.

Concerning the flourishing Bluffton College: Before the beginning of the institution's eleventh school year, we present some salient infor-

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155 And that in spite of the fact that the first and most important "German" teacher in America was a Mennonite, Christopher Dock. Before and after 1750, for more than fifty years, Dock gave such excellent elementary instruction in and around Germantown and published such distinguished didactic and pedagogical methods that he was called the "American Pestalozzi." — The education-timid, narrow Swiss Mennonites, by their influence, suppressed all intellectual culture as unnecessary; today they have long begun to rectify old mistakes.

mation from the report of the school board to the 23rd convention of the "Central District Conference" of the alliance of the "General Conference A" of the year **1910** (1910 *Christlicher Bundesbote*):

"In this year, the school was attended by eighty students in various departments. This spring there were seven graduates, four from the academy and three from the business department.

"As in previous years, a Bible course program was arranged to run alongside the regular winter course offerings. Sunday school teachers and those wishing to become teachers were the primary targets.

"Connected with that Bible course program (as in previous years) was a Bible conference, which lasted January 23 to 27. The now deceased Prof. C.H. Wedel of Bethel College, Newton, KS, gave ten German lectures and Dr. Herbert L. Willet of Chicago gave six English lectures. Prof. Wedel dealt with the epistles of Paul and Dr. Willet with the prophets and the life of Paul. These courses became a great blessing to the many from the city and the surrounding churches who attended this conference. Six students participated in the Bible course.

"As approved by the last convention, efforts to establish a maintenance fund continued. The city of Bluffton and its surroundings, together with the churches near Bluffton and Pandora, guaranteed $15,000 toward this fund as stated in the plan presented to the convention the previous year. Of the $30,000, which was supposed to be secured outside of Bluffton, Dr. and Mrs. Mosiman have received $16,000 in pledges and cash as of now . . . Moreover, above that, the board can report with great joy and special thanks to God that He has moved Br. John Herschler of Ashland, OH, to remember our school with a special gift. The gift consists of 354 acres of land valued at $30,000 to $40,000 . . .

"The need for a home for girls [hostel] *has become increasingly obvious for some years. Many a father and mother would have sent their daughters to Bluffton had it featured such a home. In the past year, the board has succeeded in buying a suitable house and arranging it as a girls' home. The purchased property consists of two houses and approximately seven acres of land . . .*

"Last January, the following teachers were re-appointed for the coming school year at the annual session of the board in Bluffton: Dr. S.K. Mosiman, as president of the school and business manager with a salary of $900; E.J. Hirschler, salary of $800; Catherine C. Cromer, salary $60 monthly; Maude Anderson, salary $60 monthly; Matilda Basinger, salary $50 monthly; Catherine Mitchell, teaching business courses, salary $400; Mrs. S.K. Mosiman, as assistant teacher, salary 75 cents per hour. Professor Evans, Professor Adams, and Miss Axeline will instruct music courses . . .

"Let us hold on to the blessing attending this work by encouraging our young people to attend our school."

Existing in the association of the "General Conference B," in the above-described relationship, is the college in Goshen, IN. With twelve teachers and three hundred students, it is the largest institution of higher education of the Mennonites of America.[156] — About this institution we only know that Rev. E. Byers is its "principal," i.e., its head, and that C. Henry Smith, author of the latest history known to us, *The Mennonites of America*, is one of its teachers. A second, apparently preparatory school for Goshen College, which enjoys the goodwill of the "Old Mennonite General Conference B," is located in Hesston, KS.

We firmly believe these schools are all younger than "Bethel," which has begun its eighteenth year. We are convinced that, knowing our Old Mennonite family members, these schools, once recognized and established as needed and salutary, will grow in depth of thoroughness as well as in the breadth and height of scholarliness and, in so doing, will remain resolutely "Christian," with their numbers steadily increasing. As a result, America will become richer by an element of education that is solidly based on biblical faith. Consequently, the sons and daughters of the Mennonites of America (all these higher schools serve both sexes equally) will no longer have to get their entire cultural training in schools, which are more or less strange or even hostile relative to their principles, and will no longer abandon the churches of their fathers in droves. All aspects of moral and intellectual education will be offered them here, because science, art, business, pedagogy, and theology are covered at these institutions. As these institutions (including the welfare institutions and missions) steadily expand and multiply, many Mennonite young men and women will find interest and work.

§98 6. **Welfare Institutions of the "Old Mennonites."** — Known to us as welfare institutions maintained by the member churches of the "General Conference B" are the following: a **home for the aged** in **Lancaster**, PA, and a second one in **Rittmann**, OH; a **sanatorium** in **La Junta**, CO; an **orphanage** in **West Liberty**, OH. Also existing are a number of societies and funds for **mutual support** in case of fire damage and every **emergency** at home and outside in both "General Conferences."

§99 7. **Evangelization**, i.e., itinerant preaching, is carried on by the "Old Mennonites" of both "General Conferences" in the same manner as we saw in connection with the "M.B. Churches," the "Conference of

[156] According to John Horsch.

United Mennonite Brethren of North America" and the Russian churches of the "Western District Conference" of the association of the "General Conference A."

8. **Missions** in America: **§100**

a) **Indian missions of the "General Conference A"** in Cantonment and Darlington, Indian Territory, as already mentioned.

b) **Industrial missions of the "General Conference B"** among the black Americans in Welsch Mountain, PA.

c) **City missions** of the "General Conference B" in Chicago, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Toronto, Fort Wayne, Canton, and other places. — The "General Conference A" also has such city missions.

9. **Foreign missions** in eastern India: **§101**

a) **Mission** of the "General Conference B" in **Dhamtari**. — This mission got its start with a shipment of grain by this conference through Rev. Lambert during the great famine in the year 1897. — For characterization of this mission, we present the following from a report in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* of March 1910 (widely abridged):

Tenth Annual Report of the American ["Old"] Mennonite Mission in Dhamtari, India, 1909

Introduction

Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth. (Psalm 46:10)

The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the Lord lack no
good thing. (Psalm 34:10)

"Another year has passed since the last report concerning the American Mennonite Mission was written. The Lord has blessed abundantly during this period, and we believe it is in keeping with our responsibility and His will that we again submit a report to those interested in the spread of the gospel among those who do not yet know it . . .

"In preceding years, when missionaries discussed the possibilities of spreading the work, they often posed the question whether the poor, terribly emaciated boys and

girls, who had been rescued from approaching death by starvation, would ever get physically and spiritually strong enough to assist in spreading the gospel. Today, many of them are active in the work of the Lord as strength permits . . .

"On December 20, 1909, we received the funds for the erection of a recreation center in the mountains of Igatpuri for mission workers who need to withdraw from work for a while . . .

Growth of the Church

"During the past year, four persons were accepted into the church by water baptism, and soon a number of those ill with leprosy will be added to the church. Some church members have died and have left a clear testimony of their faith in Jesus their Savior. — Some members had to be subjected to church discipline, because they had accused some Christian women of practicing magic. It appears as though almost all believe in witchcraft, and it is difficult to persuade them to give up those ideas . . .

"We have reason to believe that, as a whole, the Christians have grown in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. — The growth of the church in Dhamtari is largely dependent on the number of spirit-filled men and women who can be trained as mission workers and on the time that can be spent in prayer and serving the Word. Likewise needed is the faithful intercession of the brothers and sisters in the home country. — So far, almost all converts have been from among inmates of the orphanage or the leprosy asylum.

"Now more attention is devoted to the work of evangelization so that more native villagers are reached.

Bible women

"Doing the work of these Bible women successfully requires a call from God and assuming the role of missionary. Coming into contact in the villages with many infectious diseases one is not familiar with, telling the story of the gospel repeatedly without becoming impatient at the slowness with which people comprehend it, learning their customs and language, and placing oneself on their level, requires a measure of self-denial and grace which does not come naturally to a human being. Only the grace of God and time spent and experience gained in the country can render a person capable of such work. The work is attractive, however, and the field is ripe for the harvest.

"In India, paganism has its strongest backing in the world of women. Very many are ignorant and remain satisfied with their lot. Since they live shut off from the outside world, as is the case with many women of the higher castes, it is difficult to persuade them of the necessity of salvation and a higher life. They can, however, be reached by workers who are constant in prayer to God and faithfully and persistently serve them the Bread of Life.

"Urgently needed is a competent sister, who is willing to devote time and energy to instructing the Bible women and overseeing their work . . .

"Sunderganj. We employed six Bible women during the year. They have shown great interest in their work and demonstrated increased capability for it . . .

"The women will soon conclude their study of the life of Christ, after which they will take up another subject. This class met three times a week and we gave them a number of exams in which they lived up to expectations quite well. They make two rounds daily in the villages . . .

"Rudri. This year, on the average, six women were at work teaching the gospel in fourteen villages . . . These Bible women regularly sing a number of songs and explain them as simply as possible. A Scripture passage is read and explained. They often use pictures of scenes from the Bible. Many listeners often say, 'Yes, indeed, you are telling us sweet words!' — but they fail to understand that something better than living according to the traditions of their forebears is possible for them.

"Balodgahan. With the exception of a few months, three Bible women were at work during the year . . . They were faithful in their work and appear to have done it joyfully and willingly. They work five days a week. They visited 447 families and about 7,000 people received their instruction. They visited ten of the villages regularly and five sporadically. Some of these villages are in the jungle and the Bible women are afraid to go there without being accompanied by someone, because of the wild animals. Missionaries often accompany the Bible women in their work . . .

"Colportage. The work of colportage is one of the most interesting branches of the evangelistic endeavors here. Quite a number of experienced men were responsible for it, and so this work was more encouraging. Five men have gone out regularly with Scripture portions for sale. They brought the message of the gospel in song and word to many listeners . . . Whenever the missionaries had the time and opportunity to take trips, the colporteurs accompanied them . . . Since the local people are more attracted to the missionaries than to their own people, a larger number usually come to listen . . .

Sunderganj

"Dhamtari postal station, Central Provinces, India; missionaries: M.C. Lehman, Lydia Lehman, L. Ellen Schertz, Eva Harder, and Mary Burkhard.

"The orphanage for girls. At the beginning of the year, there were 142 girls in the orphanage. Of this number, one girl died, twelve married and one was transferred to Poona. At present, we have 128 girls. The number decreases year after year, and it's becoming somewhat difficult to provide the various sections with capable workers.

"The girls' spiritual development is generally encouraging. They strive to please the missionaries and show their appreciation. The weekly and daily Bible classes are interesting and, we hope, a blessing. Some of the girls pass their examinations with

high marks. We believe they are also making progress in Christian living, not just learning by rote.

"As in the homeland, Christian children in India also look forward to Christmas with great joy. Every year they want to learn new songs for the festivities.

"The girls' school. We have nine classes and only five teachers in the girls' school. That means that the teachers must do double service, but we have no other possibility at present. The results of the annual tests were quite satisfactory . . . The usual subjects are taught to three classes in the middle school.

"The students received three Bible classes per week during the entire year; each female teacher taught the Bible as well as other subjects. We placed particular emphasis on memorization of Scripture. The time will come when these memorized verses will be very useful to many of those who participate in the work.

"Medical activity. A doctor has unlimited opportunities in Sunderganj. The local hospital assistant has to turn away many patients. Medical treatment wins the confidence of the population more than anything else. We treated almost seven thousand cases during the year. We refer difficult cases to the civil surgeon.

"English school. We have carried this work on long enough to prove that it is a valuable factor in preparing the way for acceptance of the gospel, as well as being itself a means of spreading the gospel. The school grew during the year. — Presently we have eighty boys, who have registered as students. Eleven of them are Christians and the rest are Mohammedan and Hindu boys . . .

"The work in Dhamtari has developed to the point where a high school would be very advantageous. The erection and maintenance of such a school will cost a significant amount and require the constant attention of a missionary.

"This aspect of the work will not show satisfactory results unless a missionary constantly gives the school detailed attention. The school is in great danger of merely offering non-Christian boys the opportunity of acquiring a higher education, and that at mission cost. We must confront every student with the claims of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which must be made a matter of decision for him sooner or later while he attends the school.

"A number of missions in India are maintaining successful high schools and are doing good work. If directed correctly, God will bless the work.

"Village schools. This station maintains three village schools . . . For a while we faced hindrances to the work, but interest is increasing again. The Sunderganj school has four classes and eighty students. Shunkardah remained all but unchanged. Two Christian families are living there at present. The school inspector requested closure of the school. That is what happened; and we instructed the students to attend the local government school. A school intended for Christian children, but attended by a number of non-Christian children as well, continues to function.

"Industrial work. A great need in India is teaching the local people how to work advantageously. They do work and earn a living, but would achieve much more

if properly instructed. This work consists of two sections: gardening, done by the women, and weaving, done by the men. The garden is useful in various ways: the women receive instruction in gardening and the produce of vegetables and fruit helps to cut expenses for the orphans and missionaries. The men do their weaving on a small scale. It gives them the opportunity to make a living and enables them to take over weaving jobs on their own independently of the mission. Industrial work is an effective way of preaching the gospel.

Rudri

"Dhamtari postal station, Central Provinces, India; missionaries: George J. Lapp, J.N. Kaufman, and Elsie Kaufman.

"The orphanage. At present, 111 boys live in the orphanage. Of these, two live in Akola, where they are learning the blacksmith trade, and seven are in Raipur studying farming on the government experimental farm. All these are faithful in their work.

"The health of the boys was generally good. The bad enemy of the Hindus, scabies, claimed a few victims, who had to apply larger quantities of phenol and carbolic soap . . .

"We paid constant attention to religious instruction by setting up Bible classes and pursuing various studies. The boys showed great interest in them. Many received a blessing and experienced growth through Sunday school, prayer meetings, and counseling. We are happy to be able to report increased interest in God's Word due to the effect it has on people's lives.

"The pigeons are a source of much pleasure for the boys. Many of them have several pairs and they may keep them as their own. We have built a small house of bamboo tissue for them.

"Ten residents of our home got married and have work for making a living. One returned to his village, where he farms; two are carpenters, three teach in schools, two are cooks, and two are day laborers. Others will marry as soon as we can make the necessary arrangements. Without a steady job, they are not able to feed a family.

"As heretofore, the boys do their own work, except for cooking, which is taken care of by two men employed for the purpose. All bigger boys have their special work, and the smaller ones do not know how to cook.

"During the year, two boys ran away. They are young and presumably will return after wandering about for a while. Pray for them: that they may realize that they made a serious mistake.

"The boys' school. At the close of the school year, we have only Christian teachers, except for the head teacher. Finding a Christian man for that position is difficult. He is not a Christian, but he has great respect for Christianity, and we

have so far never heard that he has ever spoken or taught in opposition to Christian doctrine . . .

"The school still operates under government supervision and receives financial assistance from the government, which inspected it twice during the year. Four young men passed the exams and received government certificates, giving them the right to teach in any school approved by the inspector . . .

"The average number of students was about eighty-five. A number came from surrounding villages, so they are also influenced by the gospel. Through them, doors are often opened to new families and villages, where successful evangelization work can be carried on.

"The school is also an important factor in the training of teachers for the village schools. We instruct the students in God's Word and establish them in their faith, so that they are able to defend it against attacks.

"Only one boy from the orphanage attends the kindergarten class; the other eight come from the surrounding villages or from the families employed by us. In a few years, we will have a large class of boys from our own Christian families.

"We resumed medical activity as we were able. We had little time to devote to it. If we hadn't had a boy who can read and speak English and prepare most of the regular medicines, we would have had to send away many who came for treatment. We treated almost two hundred persons each month. Here in Rudri, we have neither the tools and medicine nor the capability to treat all who come, but we sought to relieve the most serious cases with simple remedies and serve the less serious cases brought to us with remedies. Occurring most frequently were boils, scabies, rash, syphilis, malaria, sore eyes and ears, and bad teeth, which we had to extract. At times, we had to undertake minor operations and anesthetize the patients with chloroform . . .

"We have here a rich field of opportunity for an experienced missionary doctor dedicated to God, who can properly treat all who come . . . The missionary doctor is instrumental in opening the way to many hearts.

"Village schools. The Bhatgaon school is flourishing. The children of the same village gather for Sunday school every Sunday morning. We teach them Bible verses and sing songs with Indian melodies. These sound odd to us, but the children sing heartily.

"Also maintained in Rudri is a girls' school in a small room beside the medical dispensary. Thirteen girls study here. The two female teachers find it difficult at times to hold the attention of the students, but patience and perseverance will maintain the upper hand. Only in exceptional cases do girls in this part of India receive better school instruction . . .

"Industrial work and farming . . . We are happy to be able to say that industrial work in Rudri is in a hopeful state. In a few years, we hope it will also result in cash profit . . .

Balodgahan

"Dhamtari postal station, Central Provinces, India; missionaries: M.C. Lapp, Sarah Lapp, Anna Stalter, P.A. Friesen, and Lena Friesen.

"This place was purchased for the purpose of operating a farm. We hoped to produce enough grain to allow a profit to flow into the missions account. We are happy to report that the profit the village makes at this time exceeds our expectations. We expect to sell almost enough products this year, with the proceeds covering the cost of food and clothing for the missionaries of this station . . .

"This station does interesting evangelization work. We maintained five schools during the year, with an average student count of thirty-six. A bookseller worked for us for some time and our church covered his costs . . .

"Medical activity. This year, some 4,000 patients were treated at this station… God blessed the remedies that were administered, and a large majority was healed. We will be very happy when the missionary doctor arrives . . .

"Village schools. In the past year, the school had forty-six students, thirty-six boys and ten girls . . . All the students, except for one, have parents who have not yet accepted the gospel. Our prayer is that God's Word will not return to Him empty, but will accomplish its purpose.

The Leprosy Asylum

"Few branches of Christian activity are more Christ-like than those devoted to the welfare of the helpless and suffering. Jesus never turned away those who really needed help; and who is more helpless and despised than the poor leprosy patients? In spite of their sad condition, our patients appear to be of good courage and always grateful for the help they get.

"During the year, the number of adult patients in the asylum was on average some 125 . . . Only very few of the sick are non-Christian, and these have considered acceptance into the church. All patients regularly receive instruction in God's Word…

"The leprosy patients are keenly interested in assisting to make their environment pleasant. They tend the plants and trees that surround the asylum and take care of a large garden, which provides the kitchen with fresh vegetables. The fields, although they supply them with enough work, have this year yielded a meager crop due to the drought. Farm work, such as carrying wood and hauling rice, has given the patients enough work, which has contributed to the health of the patients, as well as to the maintenance of discipline at the institution. The government official, who paid the institution a visit in December, expressed satisfaction with the fact that he saw the patients at work . . . This year the patients were given cause to rejoice when consignments of clothing and other gifts came from friends in England and America. The donors would have considered themselves richly rewarded, had they heard the expression of thanks and joy with which the patients received these gifts at Christ-

mas. They also show their good intentions to help others by, as in previous years, supporting a man who devotes all his time to preaching the gospel among the local people…"

Especially **characteristic** of this mission is its Christian-social activity based on mercy and wise economic calculation: a genuinely Mennonite trait!

§102 b) **Mission** of the "General Conference A" in **Champa** and **Janjgir, India**. As we have heard through Minister David Goerz, this work began likewise with a shipment of grain from the "General Conference A," during the great famine at the end of the nineties. This mission is a few years younger than the preceding one. — Here also we present an original report, and that from the *Christlicher Bundesbote* of 1910, № 36 and № 37 (widely abridged):

About the missionary work of the "General Conference A" in India

(Champa, Central Provinces, India, June 21, 1910)

"Dear co-workers! The Lord bless you with the presence of His Holy Spirit among you! May He answer all the prayers rising to His throne on this day and on this occasion.

"On December 9, 1900, the Kroekers and my wife and I landed in Bombay, India . . . We were received in a friendly manner for two days in Raipur by Brother and Sister J. Gass, who belong to the Evangelical American Mission. From there, we proceeded to Dhamtari, where the Old Mennonites have their station. At that time, Br. Ressler and the Burkhards lived there. We stayed there for ten months. We learned many things by observation. During this time, we studied the Hindi language, which is mostly spoken in the central provinces. Meanwhile, Br. Kroeker and I traveled to various places in search of a suitable mission field for our conference. After much searching, we settled in the central provinces. Champa and Janjgir were occupied at about the same time, and both stations were built up at the same time. After many difficulties, we received land in Janjgir and Champa on which to build two mission stations. Construction of the mission houses was begun in October 1901. Champa is situated some 412 miles from Calcutta and 814 miles from Bombay. A direct line overland from Janjgir to Dhamtari is about 125 miles, 148 by railway.

"Our mission field is densely populated; our "General Conference" is responsible for some 160,000 people. Hindus, outcasts, and a few Mohammedans are the residents. North of our present mission stations is a large, entirely untouched district, many villagers and thousands of people who have seldom, if ever, heard the name Jesus. The nearest mission station, as far as I know, toward the north is that of the

Goss Mission; how far away, I cannot say, at least a few hundred miles. In our district, there are many people who need to hear the gospel message.

"We have never been short of work in Janjgir and Champa. Since we began our stations from scratch, like Robinson Crusoe, construction was our first task. Naturally, we continued study of the language begun in Dhamtari. Some orphans arrived soon, boys and girls, and then leprosy patients also. The years passed quickly for the four of us. Once, in the initial years, Sister Kroeker was so sick that the doctor told Br. Kroeker: 'I can give you no hope.' But the Lord answered our prayers and once more restored the sister's health. Unwelcome visitors, such as fever and other indispositions, were our frequent guests. Possibly the darkest day for me was January 3, 1906, when my wife died in Calcutta. I consider it a special grace of God that my father could be here from America at the time.

"After my father left for home with my child, I was alone at Champa until August 16, 1906. On that day, I had the privilege of welcoming the Wienses in Bombay. I will never forget that happy day . . . Their arrival meant that we had received the first help from America. The following arrived here later: Sister Anna Funk in the fall of 1906, Br. P.W. Penner and spouse in the fall of 1908, Sister Anna Braun in 1908, and Br. Suckau and wife in 1909. That same year I returned to India with my present wife. The Kroekers left India in the spring of 1909 and reside in Russia.

"At present, we are a group of ten workers here in India for our conference. The Penners and Sisters Funk and Braun live in Janjgir, the Wienses, the Suckaus and we live in Champa. The two stations, some eight miles apart, are connected by telephone, which is a gift from friends in Mountain Lake. As soon as they find and purchase a suitable site, Br. Wiens and his spouse intend to build and move into the third station. Following are the details of the work in progress and the work that has been done so far:

1) The Preaching of the Gospel

"India has three seasons a year: the cool season, the hot season, and the rainy season. The cool season begins in early October and lasts until the beginning of March. The hot season lasts from March to June 15, and the rainy season from June 15 to the end of September. During the rainy and hot seasons, the missionaries of our conference cannot embark on longer preaching trips, because there simply are no outstations, where we could stay overnight and have a meal prepared. During this time, the local workers go out to preach the gospel in the villages. One must never forget that the locals are born somewhat on the tired side and we must urge them on a little now and again. Incidentally, this is due to the hot climate. We know very well that all dwellers of the tropics are somewhat slow, if not lazy. With the cool season around, the missionary himself takes to the road with his local helpers. He stays away from the station as circumstances permit.

"Perhaps in place here is a word concerning the manner in which we present the gospel to those who do not yet know it. The familiar concept, according to which the missionary stands under a palm tree, with Bible and songbook, preaching the gospel to hundreds of attentive listeners, does not apply here. At home, the tendency is to believe that those who have never heard the gospel, like to listen to the missionary's message of the cross. That may be the case in some villages, very definitely in some personal cases. Overall though, the local people are distrustful of the missionary when he arrives in a village for the first time. Some however, are friendly . . . We explain the song or a brief passage of Scripture after we have done some singing. The content of all our sermons is constantly that we are all sinners in need of a Savior and that Jesus is that Savior, who forgives our sins freely. We often present this message to completely unreceptive people. They listen in an attitude of indifference and leave with that attitude.

"Others react much differently. Not only do they give assent to what is said, but they believe the message and possibly would willingly leave their costly religion, if what the common Hindu believes can be called a religion at all, if — indeed if — he didn't have to break caste! I readily sympathize with someone who doesn't want to leave his caste, because, in most cases, what is involved is much more than what the usual friend of the mission realizes. Such a convert must not only leave his friends, but, now and then, his wife and child leave him; he is considered an outcast by all and treated as such; he is expropriated and, in some cases, loses his share of the inheritance, if he has hopes of one. In short, he is a person abandoned and avoided by his former friends and acquaintances. All this to accept a religion that is entirely strange to him! Dear friends, do not be surprised, if those who have not heard the gospel before do not immediately come in hordes; for here becoming a Christian means something. In a Christian country, we do not understand the word of our Lord: 'In the same way, any of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciple,' because we have nothing to leave but sin! Moreover, parents, friends, brothers and sisters, ministers, Sunday school teachers, etc. commend us to the Lord in prayer. There is no greater joy for parents than when they hear that their children have found the Lord. Here in India things are completely different! . . . After the sermon, we sell Scripture portions and tracts . . . Now and then, in the evening, we show the life of Jesus with the magic lantern.

2) Medical Work

"At both mission stations, we administer medicine to the needy on a daily basis. We regret that we have no qualified doctor for our mission here in India . . . Hopefully, the time will come when we in India will have a good doctor! If time permits, before distributing medicine to the patients, we offer them medicine for the heart: we sing a song, read and explain a passage of the Word of God, and speak a

prayer . . . Everyone also receives a small tract with the registration number marked on it. Since April 1909, we have administered medicine to over 2,500 persons.

3) Work with Orphans

"Because the famine was just over when we arrived in India together with the Kroekers, we could not receive many orphaned children . . . If I am not mistaken, they received a total of twenty-one orphaned boys in Janjgir. We received sixteen girls. The board wisely decided that the girls and boys should not live on the same station. We have baptized most of our orphaned children. Unfortunately, we have had to excommunicate a few . . . We have not been able to train many assistants, because, as mentioned above, we did not have the opportunity to receive many orphans. One of our boys, who got a wife from Dhamtari, is the cook, so he cannot receive support from the mission any more. Another person, who likewise got his wife from the Dhamtari orphanage, is a Bible colporteur. A third, who found a wife in the Champa orphanage, is employed here in Champa. A fourth, Nandram, studies in Raipur . . . He wants to become a doctor. Three of our girls are studying in the Christian mission school. We admittedly cannot point to miraculous results in our work with orphans, nor do those that we have measure up in their Christian life; yet we thank God for them, because we see a great difference between the life and walk of boys and young men who are unbelievers and that of our orphans. Whenever our children fail in some respects, we take comfort in what a certain missionary, who grew old in the service of foreign missions at the Basel Mission, was in the habit of saying: 'Yes, indeed, our orphans and Christians are still not what — we should be!' And I don't know whether everything is so wonderfully brilliant in the churches at home. In the churches of America, one also hears of disunity, even quarrelling, lack of love, and an obvious caste spirit. Who knows how the loving God will one day judge between the Christians here in India and those in our home country.

4) Work with Leprosy Patients

"If, on that Sunday, April 27, 1901, when we gave some rice to two poor lepers, someone had told us that, after nine years, we would have a large asylum, we would scarcely have believed him. Although, in our hearts, we had already turned toward these poor people in Dhamtari, we had no thought of ever establishing an asylum, and yet it is a fact. Puran and Sidhu, the first two patients, are both still alive. We baptized Sidhu and named him Paul. This was the beginning of the present Bethesda Leprosy Asylum. Today there are seventy-two men and sixty-four women in it. The houses we constructed are almost all occupied. We only have room for 155. When we reach this number, we must either acquire more land and erect buildings or refrain from receiving any more patients.

"The work among these poor people also has its difficulties. Mission work in general is mostly uphill. Very painful are cases where patients, to whom we think we

have done much good, flagrantly turn their backs on us and leave the asylum without saying farewell. Last week, two of our Christians, who had already been at the asylum for six years, ran away. One was a woman, who we thought was a very good Christian and would never desert us. She left without a word of thanks, without a word of recognition, without a word of farewell. That was painful for me, and I must confess it is somewhat difficult to keep up one's courage in such experiences. May God keep those who leave us from being lost! . . . There are many, however, who are grateful for what they are receiving . . . We have patients in the asylum who are beautiful Christians, although their externals are far from beautiful. Many a suffering person at home could well learn how to suffer from such a poor patient. I am just now reminded of Martha . . . She lies helpless for over a year and yet, when one visits her in her room, she does not complain much. On the contrary, she rejoices that she will soon be permitted to go home. When another leper dies, she weeps and says, 'Why cannot I go home?' Martha is a faithful disciple. Moreover, we have other women and men in the asylum who cause us much joy . . . What is lacking in particular is knowledge . . . Reading a passage from God's Word every morning and holding two to three meetings a week is not sufficient to impart much knowledge of the Scriptures to the leprosy patient. What we naturally consider sin at home, because we read it from infancy, must be taught little by little, indeed over the years to those who only hear the gospel for the first time as adults . . .

"So, we are very happy to be able to say that the work in India thus far has not been in vain, and we believe the time will come when many who do not yet know the Lord will accept the name of our Lord . . .

P.A. Penner

We can only rejoice and be astonished at the rapid growth and sound development of these two youngest Mennonite missions, and wish them continued success on the same road from the King of all true "mission."

§103 10. We must also mention that the American Mennonites are running a large rescue mission for victims of the massacres among the **Armenians** in the Middle East. They have established homes for widows and orphans at a number of places. Well-known are the names of Sisters Gerber, Lambert, Penner, and others of equally good reputation.

§104 11. **Publication Endeavors of the "Old Mennonites" of all Branches**

a) As we already know, the "General Conference A" publishes the *Christlicher Bundesbote* jointly with its Russian counterparts, with Minister J.A. Sommer as editor. Publication of this paper as well as the other

writings and books of this group is done by the "Mennonite Book Concern" in Berne, IN. — Also printed here is the English paper of this conference, *The Mennonite*.

b) The "General Conference B" has its "Mennonite Publishing House" in Scottdale, PA. This is the printing organ of the conference where the *Gospel Herald*, the already-mentioned *Mennonitische Rundschau*, the *Jugendfreund*, Sunday school lessons, and much other material is printed.

c) Many Mennonite writings: *Menno Simons' Complete Works* and a large number of works by other early Anabaptist authors, catechisms, and the like have been published by the "Mennonite Publishing Company" in Elkhart, IN, where the *Mennonitische Rundschau* was also published for many years (Elder J.F. Funk).

d) Bethel College, Newton, KS, has its own predominantly Russian Mennonite publishing house with, as is well known, some participation from Old Mennonites.

e) Not to be forgotten are the following Old Mennonite papers: *Glaubensbote* and *Zion's Call*, published by the "Egly Brethren," and *The Gospel Banner* of the "United Mennonite Brethren in Christ."[157]

We certainly do not claim to have covered the publication endeavors of the Mennonites of America exhaustively, any more than their other intellectual cultural contributions.

Herewith we **conclude Part II** of our work, "Mennonites in North America," and bid farewell to the brethren who have become precious to us during the collection and writing, as well as to all the manifold branches of our entire precious family of faith of the "Mennonite Brotherhood" on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean! **§105**

At the end of Part I, we presented a concluding chapter, taking into account the entire Mennonite community in the world together with a general statistical overview, including also the North American Mennonites.[158]

We would here like to place as capstone a brief word concerning the recently — sadly, too soon for us — deceased Prof. C.H. Wedel

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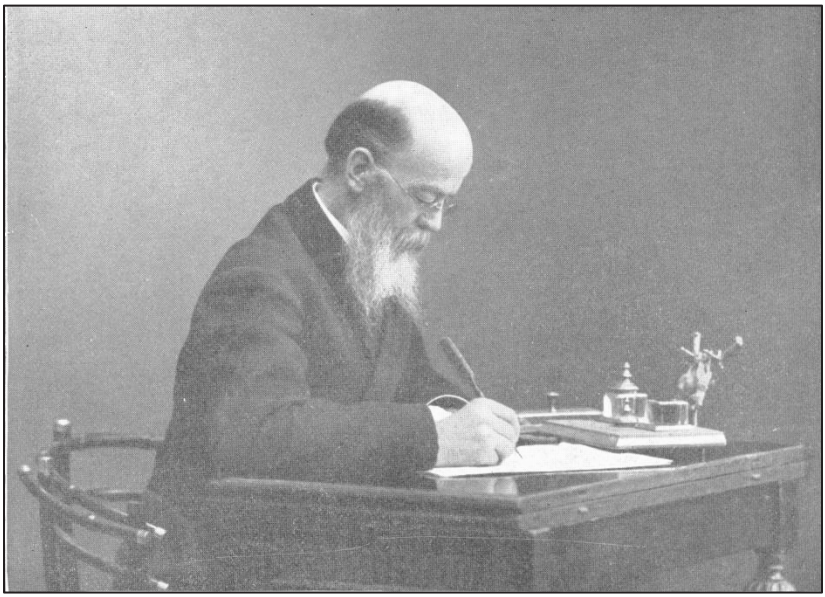
[157] Editor's note: Probably better known at that time as the "Mennonite Brethren in Christ."

[158] That Conclusion is reproduced in the section to follow.

and, at the same time, lay a small commemorative leaf for him on his fresh grave mound:

"More than previously, in all parts of our communion, the conviction appears to establish itself that, besides a lively interest in the Christian church as a whole, the essential life task of every member of our own Zion shall be and remain loving participation in the building up of that Zion."



15. Minister P.M. Friesen at his writing desk

Conclusion[159]

a) In various places of our book we have repeatedly pointed to a "Closing Chapter." We conceived of it as a very extensive one, but it has now to be relatively short: first, because our strength, due to ill health, has come to an end; secondly, because the number of pages in this book has far exceeded the limit initially set; and thirdly, because that which we wanted to say in a coherent manner in a closing chapter, has already been stated "along-the-way" in the various chapters of this book. The Mennonite relationship to the state and society as well as to other Christian confessions, has been delineated in the sections dealing with "Customs and Character," etc., "Non-Resistance and Emigration," "School matters," etc. The reciprocal relationship of the older Mennonite churches and the "Mennonite Brethren churches," and their mutual "Plus and Minus" (§259) are seen in §§71, 136(v), 137, 197, and 198; and the footnotes in §420. At the same time, this relationship is expressed indirectly or directly in the biographies of Heinrich Richert, Heinrich Epp, Bernhard Harder, and other Mennonite men, in the document dealing with the newest action of the Halbstadt congregation (§434), in the penultimate section dealing with the "Itinerant Ministry," and also in the section dealing with "Foreign Missions."

In regard to the relationship of the two main divisions of the Russian Mennonites to each other, we want to confirm what one of the Mennonite brothers said concerning the spiritual development of the Mennonite churches less than two years ago. The "brother" in question, a very respected personality in both church groups, had, as a mature person and a serious Christian, left the Mennonite Church and gone over to the "Mennonite Brethren Church" some 25 years ago. While he was fully convinced of the necessity for the establishment of the M.B. Church and while his joining with it was an act of obedience in agreement with his dear personal understanding taken for his own spiritual safety and growth, he nevertheless found that the spiritual life among our Russian Mennonites developed differently than he had at first envisioned. The spiritual growth and improvement, as far as he knows it, is relatively stronger in the Mennonite Church than in the Mennonite Brethren Church with all its advantages. In particular, he stressed that it was a miracle of God's grace that in a large district known to him, he could think of no Mennonite minister whom he does not consider a believer. At the same time, he pointed to the important fact that the churches of

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[159] Editor's note: The translation of the Conclusion appears in the English translation of P.M. Friesen's Mennonite history, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789–1910)*, translated and edited by J.B. Toews, Abraham Friesen, Peter J. Klassen, and Harry Loewen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1978), 975–81, and is reprinted here with permission. Note: The section numbers (§) in the Conclusion refer to sections in Part I of Friesen's Mennonite history.

this district, consisting mainly of unbelievers, call mainly dedicated Christians into the ministry. If someone is called who is not a true believer, he "becomes a Christian out of fear, in view of the holy profession which is his." Such evaluations of the Mennonite churches have come to us from a number of important "Mennonite Brethren."

b) The M.B. Church is well characterized in its own reports, minutes, etc., as seen in Part I, particularly in §§208–58: orthodoxy being the principle of a heartfelt faith in accordance with their confession and in keeping with their understanding,[160] as set down in 1865 ("June Minutes — Reform," §§121, 191ff) — and an interest in their own development, all in the same manner and administrative method as became their characteristic rule and habit in the second, and most important period of their development from 1865 to 1872 (§§199–207). All the mentioned reports are often flat and monotonous; seldom does a fresh wind blow the sails (as for example, in the flourishing matter of foreign missions). We had to present these reports in spite of this and because only in this way could reality and impartiality come into its own.

With regard to the *Allianz* movement, the M.B. Church as a body has been rather reactionary. What did take place in this regard was the personal work of men from a small opposition group who could not be forced out of the fellowship, although attempts were made to do so. (However, two of the most influential official and conservative brethren of the M.B. Church recently expressed the thought that "love needs to be the new way" in this matter as well. That is a new dawn with salvation under its wings!) As in regard to the *Allianz* movement, and almost to the same extent, the work accomplished by the Bible conferences has been done on a private basis. The reintroduction of the old evangelical Mennonite "Bible-courses" since the seventies, however, must be credited to the M.B. Church as a body, as well as to the preaching of the Word: evangelism, sanctification, and the teaching-sermon in this fellowship are characterized by power. They not only have relatively many educationally and theologically trained ministers (the first Mennonite in Russia with a full theological university training stands in their midst) and a small force of excellent speakers, but also a great number of speakers drawn from the ranks of the people. These speakers are called and ordained ministers and elders,

[160] Once more newly condensed and revised in the "Confession of Faith of the United Christian Anabaptist Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia" of 1900, printed in 1902 by P. Neufeld of Halbstadt (now "Raduga").

who are able to preach the Word powerfully, yet with understanding and simplicity.[161] Many of the M.B. Church members in Russia stand at the forefront in matters relating to school, welfare, and publications; but not as representatives of their church. Only the senior's home in Rueckenau,[162] a small but good piece of work, is due to their initiative as a body (see above: §385). As far as institutions are concerned, only the secondary school at Nikolaievka-Ignatievo[163] formally belongs to the M.B. Church, and we are happy that there is so little "separatism" in this matter!

The M.B. Church is undisputedly one of the "progressive churches" to this day, and we maintain what we have said in §§71, 243(c), and 232(b); many of their members are spiritually and intellectually prominent, active men in the Mennonite society; but the "growth in grace" has been relatively slower in the M.B. Church than in the older Mennonite groups (as our witness in a previous paragraph stated). Here, too, one needs to consider the words of Jesus concerning the "last" and the "first." We believe that the main error of the Mennonite Brethren Church is — in relationship to the grace received — a lack of humility and unsparing self-judgment, as well as a certain reluctance to acknowledge the good aspects, both old and new, in the Mennonite churches. Church discipline and the Christian walk of many members of their fellowship do not correspond with the ideal they talked about in their "Letter of Secession" and other documents which they have sent to the old church since 1860.

A major cause for the relative weakness of the M.B. Church are those members, who, as a recently deceased "Mennonite brother" said, are "living buried ones" (in opposition to Romans 6:4–11) and those who, as a still living "brother" says, are "baptized carnality." Their "conversion" consists only of a religious stimulation or excitement, and the act of baptism is merely a transfer of names from one church register to another (insofar as they already were members of another church). And yet, they must be considered to be believers. Spiritually speaking, however, they are certainly no less damaging than the dull, carnal element — the world of the world — the totally dead members of the Mennonite Church, who are afraid of, and hate, all intensive Christianity, who hatefully call their own church brother, yea, their own minister, a "Baptist," a "Separatist," a "Propagandist," as soon as he shows them the consequences of their carnal lifestyle and confronts them with the demands of their evangelical Mennonite confession. They welcome every obstacle to an energetic evangelical life. We consider the sincere

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[161] Elder D. Duerksen of Schoental, who died in 1910, belonged to the most distinguished ministers of the M.B. Church. See his ordination sermon published by "Radug": "The minister according to the Word of God."

[162] "Johann" Friesen, not "Martin" Friesen, as was erroneously stated, donated this property.

[163] Which we should not yet mention above in the concluding chapter, since it had not yet been confirmed at the time this book went to press.

and seriously seeking members of the older churches, who are "not as yet saved," but whom we gladly call "brethren of hope," less negative, than the "living buried" members of the M.B. Church and the "carnal element" of the Mennonite Church.

c) Other members of the M.B. Church, in my opinion no less outstanding and upright than the above-mentioned "Mennonite brother," express themselves quite differently with regard to the spiritual condition of the Mennonite Church. The honorable and loving "minister on the day of Jubilate," to whom we presented both the positive and negative evaluations, could not completely share the first and tended much more in the direction of anxious forebodings and fears. Nor did he repudiate the assertions of another "brother" that the Russian Mennonite proclamation of the Gospel, as well as its religious instruction (cf. above §364[2]) — and that more or less in every camp — was threatened by a refined rationalism. Many other "Mennonite brothers" — self-taught as well as educated men, old as well as young — from the ranks of the spiritual leaders as well as from the membership, share the anxieties of their senior colleagues, as expressed in §364(2), and of the "minister on the day of Jubilate." To a certain extent, both the optimists and pessimists will be right: our Russian Mennonite community will, in all its parts, remain as unaffected by the unhealthy criticism,[164] rationalism, and neology, etc., as all the other parts of the Christian Church, even the "Free" or "Brethren Churches." For years the author has tended in the direction of the point of view of the optimists (of those who see the best in everything, especially in view of such highly worthy men as H. Richert, B. Harder, H. Epp, Isaak Peters, etc.).

If, without naming names, we present the profound judgments of persons whom we love and hold in high regard here, we know full-well that we, before our conscience and the entire community, take the responsibility for them completely upon ourselves. What we have written in the last sections of the book (indeed, in a large part of the book) is not "history"; it is a statement of the subjective viewpoints of a contemporary; it is made up of "chronicle" and "memoirs," which will have to await the objective analysis of future historians. Nevertheless, the contemporary who reads these accounts will react to them according to his personal understanding or according to his sympathies and antipathies. Here, too, we desired to allow "both sides" to speak.

As a personal note, we would also like to direct attention to a weakness in our "Mennonite" sister churches, and that is the circumstance that many of their members — indeed important members, whom we recognize as decided believers and "brothers" in terms of the Holy Scriptures, and whom we honor and

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164 We do not mean to imply that serious textual studies are to be despised; we do not hold errors of transcription, translation, and printing to be the "Word of God."

love — more or less lose their impartiality, the ability to see things clearly, and their unfeigned brotherly love wherever "Separatists," "Mennonite Brethren," and "Evangelical Mennonite Brethren" are concerned. They are as unable to forget the (presumed and real) insults their church suffered fifty years ago, and in more recent times, as the (real and presumed) errors of the "Separatists." This is as deplorable as the M.B. Church's lack of self-judgment and humility which we have ascribed to her. "Those who are spiritual" in all groups should judge, condemn, and put off the one as well as the other weakness (cf. I Cor. 3:3, 4).

d) The author, who is well able to recall the conditions obtaining some 40–50 years ago, cannot agree with the repeated assertion that the general moral level is caught up in a precipitate decline. Conditions may well be in a sorry state in some places; in some areas conditions may even be worse than they were some time ago; on the whole, however, we do not believe the above to be the case. One need only remember the complaints and accusations of the Minister Peter Hildebrand, of the Kleine Gemeinde, of the "secessionists," of Elder Lenzmann, of Minister Bernhard Harder, and of Elders Bernhard Fast and Johann Harder, etc.! Another assertion, however, that a terrible materialism, passionate, indeed wild striving to become rich is spreading more widely and deeply among us, is true. It is also true that a great number of confessing believers from all church groups participate in ever greater numbers in this wild chase. As a consequence, financial and — associated with this — the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of the "children of God" belong to the sad occurrences of everyday life (I Tim. 6:9).

e) What means, then, are necessary to turn us from these dangers: the attack upon the sacred ancient evangelical treasure of the faith, the decline (or at least the low state) of morality, the materialism and its inevitably associated worldliness? First, we should like to refer the reader back to what we said in §364(2) in regard to the "threatening shadows" and then express the same idea in a purely spiritual and ecclesiastical sense as follows: we need a "new party," and "new alliance!" Nothing formulated! Nothing organized! We have more than enough of that. We mean an ideal spiritual union of all those (from all shades and groups of Mennonites) "who love our Lord Jesus Christ immovably," undeterred and unconstrained by artificially contorted dogmas, such as those of the pseudo-scientific critics, who are without piety and without faith; a union of all those who simply, clearly, and essentially uniformly recognize and confess Jesus Christ as we find Him in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles and in all the old confessional writings of the Anabaptists as

well as in the present confessions of the Russian, West Prussian, South German, Swiss, and American churches of the Old Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood. We desire union of those who love Jesus and have faith in Christ without regard to differences of opinion relating to church buildings, baptism, etc., and without having to "quarrel" with, to force, insult, or despise one another (even though one must openly and honestly debate the issues, while at the same time, in love and forbearance, allowing "everyone to be sure of his own conviction"); a union for a common battle against unbelief, enslavement to mammon, and secularization! In order "that Christ be preached" and accorded honor, and that His name, as that of our Heavenly Father, be hallowed amongst us and through us.

Nor do we believe that there is any other way, not even through the best conceived and most sincerely intentioned creations of congregations and societies, whereby the "unity of the children of God" will come into being in this world and period of waiting than through "the love which is the greatest" of all spiritual gifts. The long history of the total church of Christ teaches us that. We do not wish to say anything more here with regard to the endlessly controversial issue of the right and necessity to establish new "churches of believers," especially on Mennonite soil. The same applies here: everyone must be sure of his opinion; why do you judge your brother for whom Christ died; and, we shall all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ. Until the Great Shepherd Himself shall come to care for His flock, the building of God's kingdom within the now already divided and damaged church of Christ — we are profoundly convinced — will take place in a two-fold fashion: in the large church bodies, through individual and groups of believers, and in the "congregations of believers" (which we are judging, as stated in §50, footnote 27). One should compare (we name only a few of those best known to us) Thomas à Kempis, Bishop Sailer,[165] Christoph von Schmidt, Martin Boos (Roman Catholics); Johannes Arndt, Philip Jakob Spener, August Herman Francke, Richard Baxter, Hofacker, Wuest (larger Protestant denominations) and Menno, Zinzendorf (we are not dealing with the question of baptism here), Wesley, Carey, Spurgeon, George Mueller (founders and promoters of "congregations of believers"). Who of us would wish to deny that this or that member of this group of men was not sent by God to carry out His work of salvation in a time of darkness?! "Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" (according to the gifts and understanding granted them). Everything that has been considered "right" and "perfect" with regard to these questions has, until now, always proven itself to have been only "relative."

[165] The author of "The Heart of Man."

f) Of the formal means used to combat these threatening dangers — aside from the preaching of the Word, Bible study (Bible conferences, courses: §§11[c] and 434), itinerant ministry, the cure of souls, and church discipline, as well as the possible improvement of the spiritual office (§438) — the most important appears to us to be the never failing, constantly growing care for the school, and most of all for the village school. It is in this area, above all others, that we should pull ourselves together for the holy work yet to be done in such a manner as though nothing has as yet been accomplished! Here, too, all honest lovers of Jesus and true Christians should unitedly mobilize their strength, through an intimate bond of unity and a stream of enthusiasm, in order to motivate our teachers, ministers, spiritual and civil communities and institutions, wealthy benefactors and the educated in society, to work unitedly and untiringly on behalf of the cradle of our culture and our religion — the elementary schools, and then on behalf of our entire school system. Above all, our ministers, who, thank God, today stand as a body on the foundation of faith in Christ, must shoulder the great task. Exercising all their juridical rights, as well as their juridical and spiritual obligations, in a broad and loyal adaptation to the circumstances (cf. §377[3]), they must shoulder the task as individuals, as executive committees, as commissions, as councils, and as members of the General Mennonite Conference. In all religio-ethical, pedagogical, didactic, and hygienic[166] matters the fundamental principle should be: (only!) the best is good enough for our elementary schools! In 1876 the Mennonite deputies to St. Petersburg declared that our schools should be formed in such a way that they would be spiritual preparatory schools for the fellowship (above §344). But in this regard, the elementary school, the *Volksschule* (people's school), in its most encompassing meaning, is the decisive school since our fellowship, in all its various parts, is thoroughly a "people's church." And if the "people," the essential sovereigns in our ecclesiastical affairs, have theologically and morally-sound principles, they will never tolerate an unsound theology or sermon from the pulpit.

We wish to conclude this first part with a word — spoken from the depths of our soul — from the pen of a Swiss-American Mennonite.

"And finally I would like to give a personal testimony and say that all the children of God, no matter what their names, are very dear to me; and even though some of them, with whom I previously had intimate fellowship, may have distanced themselves from me because our points of view may have come to differ somewhat, I for my part do not feel any sense of separa-

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[166] A burning issue in regard to the healthcare, physical development, and strengthening of our youth. One could write a whole chapter, indeed whole books, on this issue!

tion. And the Lord was able to fill my measure of life and compassion for the unregenerate world even more, praise be to His great Name! Amen."

May God grant that such Christ-like emotions would fill the hearts of all those who love Jesus and believe in Christ within our fellowship! Then the mutual relationship of all believers amongst us and the relationship of our body to all the other Christian churches, as well as to the state, society, and mankind (I Tim. 2:4–6; Titus 2:11), would be a holy and saving one. Then we would surely be victorious over all the threatening shadows and all the anti-Christian forces, until He, our highly-praised Lord, comes to establish His kingdom.

In this attitude of mind we lay down the pen for this work with the prayerful desire: May our Old Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood live, grow, and prosper, "until He comes!"

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"It is over thirty years since the translation of Part I of P.M. Friesen's *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland* was published (1978). Strangely, no reference is made by the editors to the fact that Part II was not included in the translation. No doubt, various factors determined the exclusion of that material. Despite the general disregard of the American section, many have felt that it deserves more attention and scrutiny. While many of the documents in the section are taken from other published sources, some do not appear elsewhere and, if they do, have never been translated into English. The section clearly gives new perspectives by Americans themselves. The translation is also valuable in several other ways. First, it tells us what the Russian Mennonites were reading about their co-religionists in America. Further, it also gives us further significant insight into Friesen's own perspectives, many of which are reflected in the footnotes and others in brief statements within the main text. All those who have made this translation possible are to be congratulated!"

—Abe J. Dueck, chair of the Historical Commission of the U.S. and Canadian Mennonite Brethren Churches

"Part II of P.M. Friesen's Mennonite history addresses the North American era. Written during 1910, it was one of the first attempts to put the North American Anabaptist Mennonite story in the hands of church leaders and historians. Of necessity, this second portion was not written to report the North American experiences in great detail, but to frame their spiritual and lifestyle beginnings in the western hemisphere."

—Raymond F. Wiebe, historian and member of Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Advisory Board, Hillsboro, Kansas

"P.M. Friesen's account of Mennonite immigration, cultural assimilation, and spiritual development in the United States and Canada, Part II, consists of a diverse collection of documentation and data, taken from published and unpublished sources, including both anecdotal and formal presentations. Some authors and submitters were widely-known, some lesser known. Some had clerical credentials, some had spiritual zeal. Friesen's efforts to focus on the good, yet maintain integrity, give us a genuine history, rather than a sanitized history" (from the Preface).

—Peggy Goertzen, Director, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas

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